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EVIL AND EVOLUTION

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AN

ATTEMPT TO TURN THE LIGHT OF MODERN SCIENCE ON TO THE ANCIENT MYSTERY OF EVIL

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'THE SOCIAL HORIZON'

'All science starts with hypothesis'

FOURTH IMPRESSION

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PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

MOST of the critics of the first and second editions of this book seem to be agreed that its argument is incomplete, and some of them say that its incompleteness practically leaves the matter it deals with precisely where it was.

Of course the author does not agree with them, but as so many of them seem to insist upon it that in its original form the book was defective and inconclusive, he has, in three additional chapters, endeavoured to the best of his ability to meet their objections and answer their questions.

PREFACE

THE existence of evil in the world is the standing riddle of all the ages. This book is the outcome of an attempt to reconsider the subject in the light of the modern theory of Evolution. Readers of it may notice that it contains scarcely any reference to the Bible: no passages are quoted from it, no appeal is made to it. Nothing should be inferred from this as to the writer's opinion of the Bible. This book is intended for general readers, all of whom have a very vital interest in the world's sorrow and suffering, but many of whom are in doubt and perplexity as to the degree of authority to be accorded to the Bible.

The writer is convinced that if anything useful is to be said upon the matter at the present time, it can only be by bringing to bear upon the facts of the world around an eye of quiet observation, and a judgment fearless of everything but falsehood, and quite unbiassed by authorities ancient or modern. This is what he has endeavoured to do.

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CHAPTER I

SATAN RELEGATED TO THE REALMS OF MYTH

THE teaching of modern science has brought about a fundamental change in our views of the work of creation and in our ideas of the evil which seems to form so inseparable a part of that work. It is, however, very doubtful whether the practical effect of that change on the religious thought of our day has been at all adequately realised.

Until the past few years, the orthodox creed of the modern world upon this matter was an extremely simple one. About 6000 years ago, a perfectly omniscient, a perfectly good, and an absolutely omnipotent Creator made the world complete, fully developed, entirely perfect, but the devil cunningly introduced evil into it. It was, in a sense, a plain, straightforward, intelligible theory, and though by no means free from mystery and difficulty, it no doubt seemed sufficient. It was a simple-minded but bold and brilliant speculation that may well have appeared to any thoughtful observer of the world around to be quite probable, quite in harmony with all the facts of daily life, and eminently reasonable. After generations, of course, made a mistake

in regarding this poetic speculation as a matter of history, a heaven-inspired statement of fact. It could have been nothing more than a daring flight of imagination, scanning the whole range of created things, and, in the fullest freedom of thought, pondering on the origin of the good and evil around. That it was nothing more than this, that it should never have been taken as a statement of fact, and that it has no claim whatever to inspiration in the theological sense of the word, seems now to be allowed by most persons competent to judge of the matter.

Nevertheless it would be extremely difficult to overestimate the practical influence that that old account of creation has exerted upon mankind. True or false, it has at least done this—it has for long centuries enabled millions of men more or less implicitly to believe in the unqualified goodness of God. "God is good, and all that is good in the world is to be ascribed to Him. The devil is bad, and all that is evil around us is to be ascribed to him." This was the simple faith of the writer of that old account of creation, and it has since been the faith of unnumbered generations who have never thought of questioning its truth.

But science has entirely repudiated that old account of the origin of things. Neither in the world of matter nor in the world of mind is there, we are now assured, anything like creation of the perfect and complete. Such an idea has been wholly abandoned. It is all a matter of germ growth, of development, of unfolding, of evolution. The heavens above, the earth beneath, man himself, his physical frame and his mental and moral constitution, his thoughts, his hopes, his fears, his loves

and hates, his habits and propensities, his beliefs, his ideals—nay, even his conceptions of God and the devil—have all been evolved. Whatever creation there has been, we are now told upon a consensus of authority which it seems folly to impugn, has been a creation, not of a perfect world or of perfect life, but of elementary matter, of rudimentary germs, and everything beyond that has been evolved by virtue of principles inherent in that matter and in those germs. Man, instead of having been created in a state of perfection from which he has lapsed, has in fact struggled upwards from lower forms of life.

Now it is impossible to conceive of a more thorough and momentous change in the whole current of the highest human thought than may result, and, as a matter of fact, notoriously *is* resulting, from this total subversion of the old theory of creation. That theory assumed the creatorship, the fatherhood, the rulership of the world by a Being of entire goodness, and it put all the responsibility for evil upon a second power in the universe. The new theory altogether eliminates that second power, and it ascribes the whole system of created things, good and bad, either to the play of blind and pitiless forces summed up in the word "Nature," or to a being whose character can only be surmised in fear and trembling. The old theory began with a perfect creation designed and actually carried out with a view to the entire happiness and good of every living thing from the first moment of conscious life. The new theory begins with an imperfect creation and works up—or appears to be working up—to a perfect ideal to be attained after countless ages of strife and suffering, and very largely by the instru-

mentality of every kind of wrong and oppression, of cruelty and injustice, of disease and accident. By the old philosophy of creation the welfare and happiness of every individual living thing was intended. According to the new, the individual life is of no value whatever, and wherever necessary is ruthlessly sacrificed to the advancement of the type. The old account of creation made evil something altogether apart from the intention and the actual work of the Creator: it was sin and rebellion against Him. The new view recognises evil as part and parcel of the system of things—a temporary and vanishing part, but nevertheless absolutely indispensable to the progress of life. By the old theory the Creator had nothing to do with evil. According to the revelations of modern science, He uses it and works by means of it. It is part of His scheme of things.

Seeing this as a fact, apparently beyond dispute, our advanced thinkers have, of course, entirely remodelled their views of the Creator. For them He is no longer the Good and Beneficent Being. They cannot say what He is. There is, it is true, much in the great system of things that is good and looks to have a beneficent purpose. But then there is also much that is so horribly bad, that it is quite impossible to say what sort of a Being is at the back of the ghastly phantasmagoria. Led by Mr. Herbert Spencer, our philosophers are quite abandoning the old familiar ideas of a God of goodness and justice, of mercy and truth. That there is a power behind things they seem at present inclined to admit; it is the "Unknowable," the "Absolute," and that is about all they seem to be sure of.

It appears to me that many of our more popular leaders of thought, though they have not got so far as Mr. Spencer and his immediate followers, are on the same highway and are moving in the same direction, and that they, or those who come after them, must inevitably arrive at a similar position unless the evolutionary theory of creation can in some way be shown to be consistent with the old views of the absolute goodness and beneficence of the Creator. There are many of our religious teachers who have unreservedly accepted the doctrine of evolution, but who nevertheless are at present able to maintain their old faith. But that they are thus far able to do so is, I believe, only because they have not as yet quite realised all that is involved in evolution as held by the majority of scientific men. It is my firm conviction that that faith can be permanently sustained only by assuming an evil power in antagonism to the good.

"One only form of belief in the supernatural," says John Stuart Mill, in one of the *Three Essays on Religion*, published after his death—"one only theory respecting the origin and government of the universe—stands wholly clear both of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity. It is that which, resigning irrevocably the idea of an omnipotent creator, regards Nature and Life not as the expression throughout of the moral character and purpose of the Deity, but as the product of a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material, as was believed by Plato, or a principle of Evil, as was the doctrine of the Manicheans. A creed like this, which I have known to be devoutly held by at least one cultivated and conscientious

person of our own day, allows it to be believed that all the mass of evil which exists was undesigned by, and exists not by the appointment of, but in spite of, the Being whom we are called upon to worship."

That Manichean idea of an evil principle—embodied and represented in a personality—is of course practically, though, I suppose, not philosophically, the very idea which hitherto the churches of Christendom have held, but which the evolutionary science of the day is everywhere inducing them to give up. Almost all the more advanced thinkers of the religious world appear to be relegating this second personality to the realms of myth. They strive with passionate earnestness to hold on to their belief in a ruler of the universe full of power and wisdom and goodness; but that there is abroad in that universe also a being tremendous in power, vast in intelligence, and boundless in malignity, is a belief that seems to be already well-nigh abandoned. I have before me a recently published book [1] by one of the most thoughtful, eloquent, and influential of American religious teachers, which puts into a popular and compendious form the new philosophy of evil. One chapter of the book is devoted to an attempt to show conclusively that "The theory of the devil must take its place with Alchemy, the Ptolemaic theory of the universe, and other beliefs that the knowledge of the world has outgrown." The author of the book is a profound believer in evolution, and, adopting the Spencerian philosophy, he seeks to show that all our religious beliefs have slowly developed in just the same way as our physical frames and the earth itself have become what

[1] *The Religion of Evolution*, by M. J. Savage. Boston.

they are. He looks back at what men must have been in their earlier stages of existence on the planet, and he finds it easy to show that in the thunder that scared them and the lightning that smote them, in the earthquake, the storm, and the darkness, they found evidence of a malignant power which became to them an evil personality. "Here," he says, "is the germ idea of the devil. He was born of the logic that argues that suffering and death must be the work of a wicked being." It was perfectly natural, he says, that the ignorance of primitive man should invent the devil as a part of his mythology. "It was the simplest explanation of the facts of the world as they then appeared."

Now I believe that it still remains the simplest explanation. "The devil," says this able writer, whom I am taking as representative of most advanced thinkers on such subjects both here and in America —"the devil only complicates the origin and nature of evil." I, on the contrary, believe that the devil renders the matter comparatively simple and intelligible, and that to eliminate Satan is to make the moral chaos around us more chaotic, the darkness more impenetrable, the great riddle of the universe more hopelessly insoluble. So far from a belief in a devil complicating matters, it is to my mind the only condition upon which it is possible to believe in a beneficent God.

"Evil," says Mr. Savage, "is simply a temporary and passing condition. To put the whole thing in one word, evil is nothing more nor less than maladjustment. The devil, and sin, and sorrow, and calamity, and sickness, and tears, and death all resolve themselves into this one word. . . . If you

can find any form of evil that cannot be wrapped up in this word 'maladjustment,' then you will find what all my thinking has failed to discover."

Now I, too, believe that evil is maladjustment, but I also believe that that maladjustment itself is in all probability attributable entirely to a second power in the universe, and I hope to be able to show that this belief is a sane and a reasonable one, and may be supported by strictly scientific argument.

Let it be freely and fully admitted that no theory of evil, no reasoning on the subject, can get altogether rid of mystery. We cannot fathom these matters to the bottom, and I am bound to admit that even when there has been shown good reason for believing in the existence of an evil personality in the universe, we are still far from having fully solved the whole mystery of the matter. I may show, as I think I can, good and sufficient ground for ascribing those maladjustments to that evil power, and I may even indicate where, in the great unfolding of things, it is probable that those maladjustments were effected. But I can no more undertake to say how such a being as Satan came into existence than I can account for the existence of the Deity; nor can I suggest the precise means by which the disorder has been brought about, any more than I can undertake to explain how the exquisite harmonies and adjustments were effected. I shall endeavour presently to show that these discords in nature and in life have in all probability been occasioned by a disturbance of law, but I can no more tell you how that disturbance was accomplished than I can tell you how the laws themselves were ordained and enforced. The inducement to pursue the subject is, not that we may hope to trace

evil to its final source and dispel all mystery, but that we may get clear and right views of the Divine character in relation to evil. To underrate the power of an enemy may be serious ; to disbelieve in his very existence, when the practical effects of that existence are not merely all around you, but actually within you, part and parcel of your very nature, may involve you in hopeless perplexity in your attempts to make out the meaning of what is going on ; and just as in ordinary daily life the man who is beset by a secret enemy will be liable to be continually imputing to his best friends the misfortunes that befall him, so the man who leaves a veritable Satan out of his philosophy will be constantly liable to mistake and distort the character of the Creator, and to take hard and distrustful views of His doings.

It appears to me that for a belief in a devil we have very much the same ground that we have for belief in God. Devout evolutionists trace up the conception of God precisely as they trace up that of a devil. In the book I have been referring to, there is a chapter on "The God of Evolution." From fetichism to the highest Christian conception of Divinity, the author follows up the ideas of men with the view of showing that humanity's thought of God has always been the best it is capable of thinking at any given time, precisely as in a subsequent chapter he maintains that humanity's devils have always been a reflex of the worst that was in them. Taking the two chapters together, he shows that men have evolved both their God and their devil. He shows, too, that all that we believe that God is slowly working out —safety, health, happiness—is the result of right adjustment of men to the real facts of the universe

about them ; and that all that men have attributed to the devil—disturbance, pain, calamity, sickness, and death—is the result of wrong adjustment. Yet, as the result of his argument, he clings with intense earnestness to the belief, not only that God is a real existence, but that He is in the very "dust of our streets, the bricks of our houses, the beat of our hearts"—a life, a force, everywhere manifesting itself in form and movement ; while at the same time he concludes that "it is now being seen by all earnest and independent thinkers that the theory of the devil must take its place with Alchemy, the Ptolemaic theory of the universe, and other beliefs that the knowledge of the world has outgrown."

For my own part, I can see no reason for holding on to the one idea which is not a reason equally strong for keeping fast to the other. I declare that I find it easier to believe in the beneficent goodness of the Creator if I am also at liberty to believe that there is in the universe some other power thwarting and opposing that beneficence, and I cannot help thinking that much of the difficulty that men experience in realising the goodness of the Creator is attributable to this abandonment of a belief in Satan.

I remember, as a youth, thinking out for myself what was to me a perfectly new theory of natural law. It was simply this, that natural law was the direct personal power of the Creator uniformly exerted. The "law" of gravitation, for instance, was not a law which the Creator had passed and some other being or power put into execution, as in the case of human laws ; but that gravitation which brought two bodies together was neither more nor less than the veritable power of God, and that we had got the

notion of "law" simply because that power was always and under all circumstances exerted in the same way. This idea was at first a most entrancing one. It seemed to bring Providence into every detail of life, and to make it indeed a sublime necessity. I had, however, scarcely time to realise it, before I dropped it again with a shudder. There came a grim story of a child falling onto a fire and being horribly roasted to death, and the frightful thought occurred to me—"If gravitation is merely the direct exercise of the power of God, then it must have been God who drew that child down onto the fire and held it there." I shrank in horror from the thought and instantly dropped the belief. It could not be. It was simply inconceivable that a beneficent Being could have done it. There must be some other theory of natural law, and for years I never could entertain the idea for an instant.

The difficulty which occurred to me then is really just the difficulty by which millions of thinking people are continually finding themselves confronted whenever they attempt to realise an overruling Providence in the ordinary affairs of life. To believe that the great events of the world are directed Providentially is comparatively easy. That God gives victory to armies, brings forth the hero or the statesman when the times demand him, leads men on to great discoveries, or rolls back the clouds for the dazzling light of a new era—all this is credible. We all of us feel that it is probable the Supreme Being *would* direct and control such affairs, and though even in this wider outlook there is much that is infinitely perplexing, much that baffles all our attempts to reconcile with supreme power and good-

ness, yet we most of us can and do believe that there *is* a control.

But the moment we attempt to discern the working of Providence in the small details of life, the difficulty with the vast majority of people is simply overwhelming. "How *can* such things happen if there is a God overhead?" they are forced to cry out in their distress. "If God cannot prevent the dreadful things that are daily occurring all around us, how can He be Almighty? And if He can prevent them and does not, how can He be full of goodness and mercy?"

Now it seems to me that the simplest and most satisfactory solution of that riddle of all the ages is just the old one—that the Supreme Ruler, in His beneficent activity in the universe, is confronted by another power; that in the absolute, literal sense of the word God is not omnipotent; that He is engaged in a conflict which to a certain extent limits His power, and the final issue of which *can* be wrought out only in the course of ages. In plain terms, there is a God and there is a devil, and the two powers are in conflict. The idea is as old as humanity, and, as a scientific hypothesis, it is, in a certain sense at least, simple and intelligible, and not only may it be made to fit in with evolution, but it has, I firmly believe, the merit of explaining more of the phenomena of the moral and the physical world around us than any other conceivable one.

CHAPTER II

SOME THEORIES OF THE PURPOSE OF EVIL

I CONCLUDED the last chapter with the expression of a belief that, as a scientific hypothesis, the assumption of a second power in the universe not only may be made to fit in with evolution, but has the merit of explaining more of the moral and physical phenomena in the world around us than any other conceivable one.

Looking round upon those phenomena—even such of them as are almost every day's experience with us—it can hardly be thought surprising that doubts as to the very existence of a supreme Ruler should be so rife among us. In the very planet itself, and in the affairs of all the living, sentient creatures upon it, there are times when good and evil *seem* so nearly balanced that the best and most hopeful and trustful of men find it hard to keep fast hold upon their faith that

> God's in His heaven,—
> All's right with the world.

It is a poor heart that never soars into the sunshine, never catches something of the music of the spheres swelling over the tumult and darkness below, never glows with a great trust

That somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill;

but it must indeed be a stout heart that never sinks in doubt and despondency, questioning whether after all goodness and beneficence really can be supreme. Just consider some of the unavoidable evils to which men are exposed. Leave out of consideration for the moment all suffering arising directly or ever so remotely from the wrong-doing of men—wars, persecutions, slaveries, tyrannies, cruelties. Leave out even the incurable diseases that desolate homes, the plagues and pestilences that sweep over nations, because these things may be considered more or less amenable to human control. Consider merely such things as famine and earthquake, tornado and flood, drought and lightning, and the heartrending accidents to which men are liable. As I write, a waggon-load of women and children are going to their work in the hopfields of Kent. At the instant they are crossing a railway, a goods train comes crashing into them and strews the line with dead and dying. Can it be thought surprising that for ordinary intelligence there is immense difficulty in realising the existence of any sort of beneficent Providence that ordains or even willingly "permits" such an occurrence? Do any of us really believe that an all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God actually brought that train, or willingly allowed it to be brought, to mangle and crush those little children in their mothers' arms? Talk as learnedly and as devoutly as you please about moral discipline and the ethical uses of suffering and the inflexibility of physical laws, you cannot get further than this—that, notwithstanding such things, you have faith that

the Creator is good, but how such things are to be reconciled with His goodness you cannot tell. Yonder a woman has knelt in prayer by her bedside, committing her children to the Almighty's care, and she lies down to sleep. And in the dead of night comes the awful roar of devouring flames, and those dearly cherished children sink into the blazing pile or are frantically dropped from the roof down to the outstretched hands of the pitying crowd, only to be frightfully crushed and mangled in the fall. How *can* that mother believe that God is absolutely almighty and all-loving and would not save her children? The truth is that she cannot do it and she does not do it. The utmost she can do is more or less feebly to cling to some vague hope that God is good, though she is unable to see how it is possible. She tries, perhaps, to persuade herself, or allows herself to be persuaded, that there is in the dreadful calamity some wise purpose which God could not bring about without it, thus practically, though unconsciously, abandoning all belief in Divine omnipotence. Again, think of 1,400,000,000 of men and women and children swarming over the face of the earth, a constant prey to disease, and ever liable to burnings and crushings and maimings by every conceivable form of accident, and by far the greater part of them still beyond the reach of all but the very crudest of medical and surgical alleviation! To look merely at the physical suffering, and to say nothing of the mental agonies of humanity, who can wonder that men find it hard to believe that a Deity of infinite pity and absolutely almighty power can look down upon it all, calmly watch the sweep of great "laws" which are really the unswerving exercise of

His own energy, and let the awful tragedy go on, heedless of the agonized prayers of His own children, whom He has made with a foreknowledge of it all? Men look out upon these things and their hearts die within them. It is all darkness and mystery impenetrable. Here and there are rifts in the gloom that give glimpses into the infinity of some vast scheme of beneficence, but for many at least, perhaps for the majority, such rifts are continually blotted out and there is no trust or hope. Men give up the riddle. They cease to speculate. They take life as they must. They grow impatient and contemptuous of dogmas and theories that seem to them to have no basis in the facts of the world around them, and they fall into absolute indifference and "agnosticism."

It is in a very great measure, I believe, because men have to so great an extent lost sight of a second and a malignant power in the universe, it is because this second power has been so generally regarded as unreal and mythical, that there has been so much doubt and uncertainty about the existence of the Supreme Being. They have attributed to the Creator what has really been—indirectly at least—the work of His potent enemy, and they have perplexed and distracted themselves by attempts to conceive of the motives that could possibly have actuated the Creator in such work. At one time they have seen in the Supreme Being merely a magnified image of their own natures, with all their faults and follies, their passions and weaknesses. He has done this, that, and the other piece of cruelty or injustice because it has pleased Him to do it. He was Supreme. He was the Creator, the irresponsible Ruler of all things, and therefore had

a right to do it. His own mere pleasure was the all-sufficient motive. Men outgrew this idea of a mere despot. They cast around them to see how it was possible to reconcile supreme goodness and beneficence with the infliction of sufferings and wrongs, against which every humane and righteous instinct within them revolted, and they conceived the idea that though the Creator did actually send the afflictions, it was not because He was a despotic tyrant. He did it not for His own gratification or from mere caprice, but for human welfare and as a father, correcting, training, educating his children. It was observed that out of the furnace of affliction men did often come better and purer for the ordeal, and it came to be believed that all the suffering of this life was a dispensation of Providence designed—or at all events permitted—for spiritual welfare. Life here below came to be a training, a discipline, a preparation for a better world above. It strengthened and purified and fitted for a higher plane of existence. Above all, this mystery of evil inflicted or permitted is, it has been argued, absolutely necessary as a means of exercising and developing free will.

> I formed them free, and free they must remain
> Till they enthral themselves: I else must change
> Their nature, and revoke the high decree
> Unchangeable, eternal, which ordained
> Their freedom.

There is really so great a semblance of force in this argument of Milton's that it is not surprising it should have stood theologians in stead for many a long day, and it might have served for many a long day to come if, in the whole realm of moral and

physical nature, there were no evils but such as might conceivably be traceable to men's actions. Such, however, is far from being the case. You have to account for a whole multitude of evils with which men can have absolutely nothing to do—evils such as those I have just been naming—floods and storms, earthquakes, lightning-strokes, pestilences, often arising from natural convulsions, the blighting of crops by drought, their devastation by animal hordes, and so on. None of these things are traceable to any exercise of men's free will, and only remotely and indirectly can they be said to exercise any influence *on* free will; indeed, they often occur in regions of the earth where there are no men to be in any way affected by them—where only the lower animals are the victims of evil. Sooner or later there was bound to come a period in the history of human thought upon the subject—just as there is pretty certain to come in most men's lives—when this theory began to fail and break down, as the clue to the mystery.

And now comes science with her solution of the riddle. And as it falls in with and confirms, in some measure, the educational and development theories of the latest theology, the boldest and ablest of the theologians have eagerly and unreservedly accepted it.

The teaching of science, according to the most trustworthy expounders of it, is briefly this. Somewhere within a hundred million years of the present time—it seems impossible to be more definite—the first faint glimmering of rudimentary life appeared on this planet. It was the very simplest conceivable form of life—minute specks of a slimy, semi-fluid sub-

stance, which we have been taught to call "protoplasm"—the first thing moulded. From that elementary material, according to our leading scientists, the whole world of animal and vegetable life has developed by minute stages, through a period of time which—though there are differences of opinion as to its approximate duration—all are agreed must have been inconceivably vast. And through the whole of that time the upward progress of life has been promoted by a never-ceasing struggle for existence and by the natural selection of the fittest for propagation. "There is no exception to the rule," says Darwin, "that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate that, if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by a single pair. Even slow-breeding man has doubled in twenty-five years, and at this rate in less than a thousand years there would literally not be standing room for his progeny." There has consequently been perpetual struggle for existence, and it is just because only the strongest and the cleverest of the combatants have been able to live—just because the weak and the timid, the ailing, the poorly endowed have died out or have been trampled out of existence in the fight—that all the higher forms of life, including man himself, have been evolved.

Now this theory, as I have said, falls in in some measure with the latest theology. Theology has been teaching that the world is a place of training and development. Science entirely confirms this not only with regard to man, but with regard to every phase and form of life. Theology has taught that by conflict is really God's way of building up the human soul. Science shows that not only

human souls, but all animal, and even vegetable, life has, to a great extent at least, been built up in the same way. Theology has argued that we are placed in this world of stress and difficulty that we may struggle up to higher stages of existence, and science tells us that that has been very largely the course of things all through creation. "The very latest science," says the preacher, "so far from being in conflict with the main teaching of religion, entirely confirms it. Evil is not God's purpose. Out of all this discord and confusion He is slowly evolving harmony and happiness. Evil forms no part of the ultimate design. It is merely maladjustment, and maladjustment is slowly being eliminated. When the whole scheme has been perfected, and right adjustment has been finally established, there will be an end of evil." Thus the slow process of creation as revealed by science is made sublimely suggestive of the entrancing possibilities of the higher existence to which theology has so long been testifying.

The maladjustment theory of evil is the latest word of scientific theology on the matter. Nature is incomplete. Evil is merely the result of that incompleteness. Evolution is gradually bringing about right adjustment. Slowly, things are getting into right relations with each other. Evil is gradually being eliminated, and

> Good
> Shall be the final goal of ill.

This I believe to be the truth, but it is not the whole truth. It still leaves the bewildered doubter face to face with this appalling assumption—that the selfishness of mere brute force is a vital and inherent necessity of nature, the very mainspring of creation,

the prime mover in the progress of the world—that the Being who, the preachers declare, and who, we would fain believe, is the very embodiment of all that is merciful and good, loving and just, has yet for millions of years, upon the clearest evidence of science, been working by every form of selfishness, cruelty, and wrong. The explanation of science is probably the true one as far as it goes, but, taken by itself, and apart from some further elucidation of the mystery of evil, it will, to say the least of it, hardly be likely to re-establish any sort of faith in orthodox teaching about life and destiny, about man and his Creator. There is somewhere a fundamental incongruity between the God of nature and the God proclaimed in the pulpits, and to many minds it seems that there is no possibility of getting rid of that incongruity. Science hardly concerns herself with the difficulty. It is her province, she holds, to present facts as they really are, and not to reconcile them with theories with which it is generally assumed science has nothing to do. It is for theology to show how the facts can be reconciled with her theories, and that is what theology thus far has quite failed to do.

CHAPTER III

THE FATHERLY EDUCATION THEORY

In trying to explain the existence of evil, poets and preachers are wont to console us by arguments based on the analogy between human and Divine fatherhood. They tell us that God does such things, or permits such things, in just the same way that you or I may inflict suffering on a dearly-loved child—sorrowing for the child, keenly sympathising with it in its pain, but yet inflicting it relentlessly, because, with the wider sweep of our knowledge and with our power of foresight, we can see that it will be for its ultimate good.

Now this is a very vital matter. That in the most literal and absolute sense of the words God is the Father of all living things should be the one great central truth of the universe. The Fatherhood of God involves the brotherhood of man, and if it can be accepted as a fact, you have at once a strong cohesive principle binding together the whole human race and vitalising the whole social organism. With the Fatherhood of God life is intelligible and full of hope and purpose. Without it, all is chaos and doubt and darkness. Nothing can exceed the importance of belief in it if we are permanently and

ultimately to have any semblance of what we now understand by religion, or—as I at any rate believe —any ground whatever for faith in a progressive social organism. It is a matter of the most vital importance that we should be able to entertain a firm and abiding belief in the Divine Fatherhood, but the belief must be based on reasonable ideas of that fatherhood. On a superficial view of the matter the analogy between the human and divine looks to be complete. On such a view it seems eminently reasonable to suppose that, when we see human fathers inflicting suffering for the good of the children they love, we have a type and suggestion of what the Father of us all may be doing in the great human family.

But, as it has often been urged, obviously the cases are not parallel at all. If you impose suffering upon your child, your sole object is the good of that child, and you inflict the pain because it is altogether out of your power to secure that good without it. But if God is omnipotent and rules with undisputed supremacy, He could secure the ultimate good without the suffering. To say this, is merely to affirm that God could have created men perfect in strength, in goodness, in heart and intellect, perfect in body and mind and character, without the agency of evil. The first chapter of Genesis declares that God actually did so, and though the first chapter of Genesis, as I have already said, can no longer be regarded as having any historical credibility, the old writer of it, whoever he may have been, must be allowed by all impartial critics to have taken a speculative flight quite sublime in its boldness. He cannot be allowed inspiration for historical accuracy, but it seems to me that he

most certainly had an inspiration that gave him keen insight into the character of the Creator and the real design of creation. That old writer of Genesis saw no necessity for evil as one of the factors in creation. He saw no need for æons of suffering to produce a perfect human race. It never occurred to him to doubt that God could create a world of entire perfection, and he assumed as a matter of course that He would do so. He would see clearly that if the Creator could not bring forth a perfect man, He would not be absolutely omnipotent; and that, if He could do so and did not, He could not be a being of perfect beneficence. He had to choose between omnipotence and perfect goodness, and he held fast to his faith in the goodness of God. He declared that the Creator could and did make man perfect, and though he did not understand, as we do now, that that making must have been a process of unfolding, extending through inconceivable periods of time, he saw that the purpose of the Creator was good and only good, and he threw upon an opposing personality entire responsibility for the origin of evil.

If the Creator could not, He is not omnipotent; if He could and did not, He is not a being of beneficence. From that old dilemma there is absolutely no escape. You cannot get away from it by saying that God has some higher purpose to serve than the mere avoidance of suffering, because to an omnipotent being that higher purpose would be as easily achieved as a lower one. A father takes his child to undergo some painful operation at the hands of a dentist. The father is wise and beneficent in doing so. Sound teeth and good digestion are what he desires for his child, and he believes too that the pain may be not

altogether without its uses in promoting manly fortitude of character and a sympathy with the pain of others, and he knows no better way of attaining these ends. He steels his heart against the temporary suffering of the child, and he is willing to appear hard and unfeeling. It is the best course he knows, and he shows his love by steadfastly adhering to it while his own heart aches.

But imagine that that father knows perfectly well that there is another way by which exactly the same results may be attained, both physical and moral, and without the least suffering. What motive can he have for still adhering to methods of relentless severity? How can he adhere to such methods and still love the child? If it is in his power to attain his benevolent end without the suffering and he does not do it, he cannot love the child. If he loves the child and inflicts the suffering, it can only be because he can find no other means of attaining his purpose.

That dilemma is as old as humanity's speculation as to the origin of evil, and on one horn or the other men in their anguish are piercing themselves to this day. All the wide world over they are striving to reconcile absolute omnipotence and perfect benevolence in the ordering of this world, and they cannot do it. Some of the best of them sigh sadly over their morning newspapers as they read of plague, pestilence, and famine, battle, murder, and sudden death, of commercial ruin and family wreck, and good men going down under triumphant rascality; they scan the great human arena, tell themselves that it is mystery awful and impenetrable, and wait as patiently as they can for light and comfort. They would fain persuade themselves that it is educational, all this

frightful prevalence of evil, and with regard to much of it this undoubtedly does afford a little help in the solution of the enigma. Most of us have had conflicts and sufferings out of which we have come wiser and stronger and better, and no reasonable person will for a moment deny that sorrow and suffering often exert a strengthening and refining influence. But, if we are to be quite candid, is it possible to dispute that it is almost equally true that the evil of the world —its cruelties, its injustice, its discouragements, its gloom and sadness and suffering—are continually crushing out and blighting the strength and goodness and happiness of millions? Find me one man or woman who has been made gentle and good and strong by the evil around, and I will find you at any rate another in whom faith and hope have died out, and who has been embittered and hardened and degraded by it. That it is in some sense and to some extent educational, happily is undoubtedly true That calamity and suffering have their instructive uses; that there is a Power that makes for righteousness under the most discouraging circumstances, and that that Power is continually turning even storm and tempest, death and disease, accident and crime to the good of mankind, may well be believed. But it is just as easy and just as rational to believe that these things do frequently tend in exactly the opposite direction, and though the world in its perplexity tries hard to believe in the Fatherhood of God as a full and sufficient solution of the mystery in which it is involved, it is hardly possible to do so, so long as that Fatherhood is to be charged with responsibility for the evil of the universe as well as for the good.

I shall be told, no doubt, that it is men's own

fault if they go down under the trials and sorrows of the world—that God means it all for their discipline and training, and that if they would only take life's discipline aright, it would all redound to their good here and their happiness hereafter. Well, it is no doubt possible to take that view of it, and there seem to be many minds able to regard it as satisfactory and conclusive. But for all thoughtful observers it presents insuperable difficulties, and those difficulties have been immeasurably increased by the modern revelations of science. When human nature stood apart from the rest of creation, and God's dealings with men were supposed to have no sort of relation to His dealings with the lower realms of life, this special discipline for man's special benefit may not have appeared altogether incredible. When nature and human nature seemed to present two entirely different spheres of Divine energy, no one would think of tracing any analogy between the trials and the discipline of human life and the struggle and strife of the brute creation. Recent biological science, however, puts the whole subject in a different light, and even if we accept only what is indisputably true in scientific teaching, it necessitates a total change of thought upon the matter.

The truth is that we seem now to have in the upper world of which we form a part exactly a counterpart of what is going on in the lower realms of creation—a fierce stress and struggle and the survival of the fittest. Just a few of the strongest are able to go through the ordeal and come out the stronger for it, but all the rest are more or less injured by it, and a very large proportion of them suffer a terrible deterioration, while not a few go down

altogether. If the strength of these strong ones—if the survival of the fittest, is really the one purpose of creation, I am bound to admit that purpose is served. But how is it possible to believe in the unqualified goodness and beneficence of the Supreme Being who willingly and deliberately submits myriads of His creatures to an ordeal that He knows they cannot endure, in order that some comparatively insignificant few of them may be fitted for His special purpose with regard to the race? If you believe *that* of the Supreme Being, you must inevitably be driven sooner or later to the position of Herbert Spencer and those of his philosophy. Under this new light which science has recently flashed over the whole realm of life, men are not able to believe that the stress and strain under which they find themselves could ever have been designed for the good of the whole race of mankind. They cannot resist the fearful suspicion that, instead of being an education for all the race of men, it is a pitiless process of development for the few by the ruthless sacrifice of the many. They cannot resist the conviction that if the strife and suffering of the world are really a part of the design of creation, for myriads of the human race the Fatherhood, to say the least of it, is shrouded in awful mystery.

Peering out upon the world at large, savage and civilised, and looking along the many dark passages of human history, one cannot but feel that the waste of such an educational scheme for the world is altogether too awful. That earthquakes and famines and accidents and commercial disasters have their moral lessons is undoubtedly true; but that the moral lesson can be in any sense the purpose and explanation of such occurrences cannot for a moment

be entertained. Take any great catastrophe of history —the Lisbon earthquake, for instance. In about eight minutes fifty thousand people were crushed to death, or swallowed up alive or devoured by the inrushing sea. Who will venture to maintain that the world has derived from that awful event any moral or spiritual lesson at all in proportion to its magnitude? The one vivid impression that humanity has derived from the occurrence is a sense of the potency of the brute forces of nature and the puny impotency of human beings in their grasp. Such displays of power—apart from some intelligent and intelligible theory about them—so far from educating or ennobling the world, may tend only to make men, in their hearts, cringe and cower like slaves under the heel of a despot. The Ring Theatre in Vienna catches fire when crowded with people, and a thousand of them are trampled and crushed to death. What lesson has the world derived from that tragedy that can in any sense be said to compensate for the horror of it, or can neutralise the influence on men's minds of what seems to be an awful display of Providential indifference to human life? Such occurrences do not engender trust in the Providential Ruler of the world. They tend rather to shake confidence and to overwhelm in doubt and perplexity.

No; this educational theory of the purpose of evil in the world will not do. To say the least of it, it is insufficient. That there is a general tendency towards the better and the higher, that good is continually evolving from evil, that the very sorrows and sufferings of life often become the sources of health and strength and eventual happiness, is most encouragingly true. That crime and immorality,

error and accident do often emphasise with tremendous power the precepts of morality and religion, happily cannot be disputed. But it cannot be the main purpose of evil merely to enforce and illustrate the importance of goodness. If this were its main purpose it must be pronounced a calamitous failure.

But you may say, "Where does Satanic power come in? You have been talking of merely physical evils. Granting that among the moral forces of the world there is a Satanic power at work, how can that purely spiritual influence be supposed to bear upon the merely material and physical evils of the world—earthquakes and famines, fires and floods, tempests and falling rocks?"

We shall have presently to consider that point more particularly. In the meantime, bear in mind that it is not a question whether such matters are directed and controlled by spiritual force. If behind these material phenomena there is any power at all, it certainly is a spiritual power. The only question is what sort of a spiritual power? Is it all the doing of an almighty and an inscrutable God, as terrible in some of His works as He is tender and beneficent in others, or is it the work of a beneficent being thwarted and impeded, obstructed and opposed by a bad one? We must return to this. What I am now trying to show is that we are surrounded by manifestations of evil which there is no possibility of reconciling with any Providential government that is at the same time absolute in wisdom and goodness and almighty in power, and that none of the orthodox solutions of the riddle can be accepted as adequate—except the most orthodox of them all, the actual existence of Satan.

The educational theory of evil by itself will not do. Life with its trials and troubles undoubtedly is an education, and in the cases of some few—comparatively few—the outcome of it is a glorious triumph of the divinity that is in human nature over the worst that evil can do. These triumphant results may be, and ought to be, exultantly accepted as evidence of a power in the universe ever striving for goodness and happiness. But depend upon it, these educational successes are brands plucked from the burning. They are but a mere salvage from the wreck. To say the least of it, they are largely counterbalanced by failures. This life was never planned and evil was never "permitted" for the sake of them.

The purpose of this life, good people tell us, is our training for eternity. Did it ever occur to any of them to ask how it can be that an educational course of a mere twenty years, fifty years, seventy years, could ever have been deliberately arranged for with a view to its effect for all eternity? Life is a mere flash in the pan, a tick of the clock, a bubble on the stream, a speck of foam on the ocean. Moralists have exhausted the resources of language in the attempt to illustrate the brevity and insignificance of life as compared with the eternity beyond. And yet the trials and disappointments, the anguish and the tragedy of life have all been designed as a preparation for the world to come! What would you think of the wisdom of the father who sent his child to school for half a day to get an education that should set him up for life? Yet that father's idea would be wisdom itself compared with the folly of making a miserable threescore

years and ten a schooling time for all eternity. And besides, if souls cannot be trained, and characters formed, and wisdom acquired, and intelligence developed without the sorrow and suffering of a world like this, what folly it is to talk of a heaven hereafter. What is your heaven to be? Finality? No. Finality means stagnation, and stagnation means decay. In this world certainly, and probably in all other worlds, the moment you cease to grow you begin to degenerate. Growth is the very law of life. If this life is to have any hereafter there must be further progress and development. Character must advance in power and in worth, experience must accumulate, faculties must expand, spheres of activity must enlarge, free will must have greater freedom, and goodness must shine purer and brighter. But how can that all be, if God Himself cannot train character without suffering? The truth is that God can do it, and He does do it. If you want evidence and illustration of this just watch a troop of healthy boys at play. Every breath they draw is an exultation; every muscular movement is a delight; every struggle is an intoxication. Mentally and morally and physically the lads are developing not only without pain, but with positive rapture of enjoyment, and, broadly speaking, that, as far as we can see, appears to be the Creator's method throughout the whole realm of animal and spiritual life, wherever that life is healthy and the conditions normal.

"All evolution," says a writer of a recently published book on this subject—"all evolution, moral, social, and physical, is through pain." It is a monstrous fallacy and grievously mischievous. So far

from all development of faculty being through pain, even in the world in which we live, evolution by happiness is by far the more general rule, and in all probability is wholly the Divine purpose. In all the higher ranges of human faculty, who are the people who develop most rapidly and most fully? Is it they who are impelled by pain? Emphatically not. Artists, and poets, and preachers, and authors, and men of business enterprise in every phase and form, inventors, and teachers, and musicians, are all of them successful in the development of their faculties just in proportion as they find themselves in their proper and natural spheres and are happy in their work. That they have to strive is no doubt true, and that their efforts are often made through much pain and discouragement is also indisputable. But strife under right and healthy conditions, as I have just said, may be rapturous enjoyment, and that men, under the stimulus of the work they delight in, will despise suffering and toil on in spite of it is no evidence of the power of pain to evolve; it is, on the contrary, unanswerable evidence of the power of happiness. It is quite time that the ridiculous idea that pain and poverty are prime and necessary agents in stimulating to mental and moral effort was exploded. "Most wretched men," I know it has been said,

> Were cradled into poetry by wrong;
> They learn in suffering what they teach in song;

and no doubt it is true that *some* poets have taught in song *some* things that they have learned in suffering. There is truth in this couplet of Shelley's, just as there would be in the assertion that poets have

taught in song what they have learned in envy, hatred, and malice.

Taking the whole world over, pleasure is a greater promoter of human development than pain — infinitely greater. Pain, no doubt, has played a stupendous part in the world's evolution, but an infinitely greater part has been played by the lusty vigour of animal life, the insatiable keenness of intellect, the love of kith and kin, the placid enjoyment of home, the absorbing delight in congenial work, the exultation of achievement, and the approbation of those around.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVOLUTIONARY EXPLANATION OF EVIL

HEALTHY and happy life, our scientific theologians tell us, is clearly the Divine purpose for the world. We are moving on towards it. The world is fast adapting itself to the physical forces of Nature, and it is falling into line with the moral principles of the universe. Little by little it is learning what are the laws of God and gradually submitting to them. In both the physical and the moral spheres maladjùstment is being corrected and evil is vanishing.

"Evil," says Mr. Savage, in the book from which I quoted in the first chapter, "is a temporary and a passing condition," and "the perfect humanity will come, when there is complete knowledge of human relationships and a complete obedience to the physical, mental, and moral laws of God." There is evil in the world, that is to say, simply because the whole system of things is imperfect. As the system evolves, evil will disappear. The completed design is wholly benevolent. When the whole grand scheme of things shall have been unfolded, this will have become apparent. Evil will finally have disappeared and there will be nothing but health and peace and universal happiness. The world is fast

adapting itself to the physical forces of Nature, and these physical forces are slowly coming into proper adjustment one with another. In the great work of creation, it seems, we cannot expect perfection at first. Some little confusion and blundering must be looked for until things have shaken down a little and have had time to get into proper adjustment. But in both the physical and the moral world maladjustment—evil—is disappearing, and an absolutely perfect universe is slowly evolving.

But in the meantime we have to believe as best we may that a Being of omnipotent power, of infinite wisdom, and pure benevolence has put together a machine so full of maladjustments that every now and again it makes the world a charnel-house, life a burden to untold millions, and death at once a horror and a release. There is enough in Nature and in human life to afford at times the most thrilling suggestions of a grand purpose, a perfectly entrancing ideal of what might be ; but there is also enough that is dark and dreadful to have made some of the noblest natures, the finest spirits of all time rush away into deserts and caves or the peace of the grave in horror and despair. And God foresaw it all and deliberately planned it!

That the great system of things is slowly working its way up to a glorious degree of perfection—higher and happier for every living creature—is the most entrancing truth that science has displayed to the world since the day of science first dawned, but that creation and evolution necessarily involve evil and "maladjustment" is an idea based on a false analogy. No doubt creation is a process of evolution. It is a gradual unfolding. The work always has been in-

complete, is now, and for ages to come—perhaps for all time to come—will be incomplete. But a thing is not necessarily evil or faulty because it is imperfect. A rosebud is an imperfect rose ; but not only is there no element of evil about it, but it has a beauty, a charm, a perfection peculiar to its immature condition. A child is an undeveloped man, but if it is but healthy and congenially circumstanced, it has a beauty and a happiness all its own, and such as only a child can have. Why might not the whole creation in its infancy have been characterised, like the rosebud and the child, by a perfection, an immaculate beauty peculiar to its early stages, and have gone on unfolding stage after stage, each richer and riper and more glorious than the preceding? What ground have we for assuming that the beginning of creation must necessarily be faulty, full of "maladjustments"? Why must the grand scheme of things move on upward through a protracted series of evolutions characterised by all that is tragic and fearful, instead of unfolding like a rose under June sunbeams, every stage in the sublime drama perfectly adapted to the happiness and well-being of every sentient creature.

The fact is that those who have adopted this apologetic line on behalf of the Creator and His faulty creation are misled, as I have said, by a totally false analogy. They argue about the Creator's beginnings of things from what they see of human beginnings. Something wrong, something that does not work quite as intended, something that requires adjustment and amendment, is almost inseparable from our beginnings. The establishment of any new branch of the public service, the development of any

new industry, the opening of a new railway, will be sure to be characterised by a good many faults and imperfections. We expect them and we make allowance for them. A short time ago the Great Eastern Railway threw open its enlarged terminal station at Liverpool Street, and nearly their whole system was disorganised for days. People then—some of the more reasonable and more experienced, at all events—made much the same excuses for the faults and failing of the railway company that our philosophers and theologians are now making for the "maladjustments" of the universe. In so great and complicated a business it was no wonder things did not go with perfect smoothness and regularity just at first. Their plans might be ever so carefully arranged, but there would be sure to be here and there points at which a little adjustment would be necessary. Give them a little time and things would go smoothly enough.

That is virtually what this "maladjustment" theory comes to. In its main lines, we are told in effect, the plan of the universe is perfect in its wisdom and beneficence, but in so vast a scheme it is not surprising that here and there there should be maladjustments. Absolute perfection is, however, being slowly evolved. There seems, indeed, a close analogy in this respect between the works of men and the works of the Creator. We see in the universe merely what we see every day around us. But the analogy is altogether delusive. Why does not a railway or a factory or a new branch of the Post Office work with perfect smoothness and efficiency from the outset? Of course it is because those who are directing and those who are employed are

deficient in knowledge and experience and skill. The best of arrangements are upset by occurrences totally unforeseen, and moreover a certain amount of practice and experience is necessary before even the most efficient plans can be efficiently carried out. In the work of creation nothing of the kind can be supposed. There must be perfect skill, perfect wisdom, perfect foresight.

Some of our philosophers will tell you, no doubt, that the maladjustments are due to man's perverted free will. Man was created free to put himself out of harmony with his Creator and he has done so. Men must be free, they tell us, to do evil as well as good, if they are to be men in the best sense of the word : it is the very condition of their highest and fullest development. They have chosen to use their freedom to run counter to divine, physical, and moral laws. That is maladjustment. That is evil. When they have learned to understand those laws and are willing to adjust themselves to them, evil will be at an end. So we are told.

But this obviously is not true. I am not overlooking the evident fact that even in a perfectly constituted world, if living creatures are to be physically capable of pleasure, that very capability involves susceptibility to pain, and that in the mere exercise of free will, quite apart from wrong-doing, they may entail suffering upon themselves. I shall have something to say about this later on. Let us leave that for the present. As I have already pointed out, you have to account for a whole multitude of evils with the origin of which men have absolutely nothing to do—floods and storms, earthquakes and lightning-stroke, the blighting of crops by drought, their

destruction by animal hordes, and so on. With none of these things can man's free will have anything to do, directly or indirectly; indeed, as I have before said, they often occur in regions of the earth where there are no men to be affected by them, where only the lower animals are the victims of evil. If there is any particle of truth in the evolutionary theory of creation, this earth of ours must have been the scene of ghastly evils millions of years before man appeared upon it. In all probability the maladjustments of the physical world and the lower animal life upon it were far greater, ages before man appeared upon it, than they have ever been since. An eminent astronomer has calculated that when the moon hovered round the earth only a short distance from it, the tides that swept the ocean twice a day must have been 600 feet high. That, in the condition of the earth at that period, can hardly be regarded as an evil—hardly perhaps as a maladjustment. But the gradual subsidence of those appalling tidal waves is very typical of the toning down of the mere brute forces of Nature in the course of ages. Nature was ruthless, and animal life when it appeared was "red in tooth and claw," long before man came upon the scene. Evil could not have originated with man.

The truth is, that in order to explain the cause of maladjustment in the handiwork of the Creator, you have to seek some cause, some disturbance common to both the moral and the physical spheres. It must be some cause outside man, and—unless you are prepared to ascribe to the Almighty limitations and imperfections of precisely the same kind as those of a railway manager—it must be apart from God. If

God is perfect in creative power, perfect in knowledge and in beneficence, it is simply inconceivable that He should deliberately have planned and created this universe with such "maladjustments" as we find in it. When a railway manager sits down to make his final arrangements for opening a new system, he is perfectly well aware that sooner or later accidents are certain to happen. He knows that here and there there will be flaws and weak points, that may at any moment bring about shocking catastrophes, but he is justified in carrying out his scheme nevertheless, because the public benefit will enormously outweigh the individual suffering, and such accidents are quite unavoidable. But suppose they are not unavoidable —suppose that it is quite within that manager's power to make his system so complete and well organised that no accident can ever happen. Will he then be justified in leaving these flaws? Can he excuse himself by arguing that upon the whole the good resulting from his services renders this incidental evil by comparison a thing of trivial insignificance? Of course he cannot. You would have not the least hesitation in saying that if he knew of the imperfections, and foresaw that accidents would result from them, and took no steps to remedy them, he showed a want of humanity and conscience. If the man says that he was not aware of the flaws— very well; that is a justification. His knowledge and foresight were limited. Or he may say that he saw the imperfections and was aware that they would probably lead to accidents, but could not see how to avoid them. That again is intelligible: the man's power was limited, and the preponderating good he aimed at justified his incurring the risk, and even the

practical certainty, of disaster. Or again the manager may say, "Yes, I knew there were faults, and I saw they would probably lead to accidents. But in the long run it is better that there should be some liability to accident. It tends to promote good order among passengers, and it develops vigilance and care, skill and devotion among the staff." It is just conceivable that under the influence of such an idea even a humane and conscientious man might persuade himself that he was justified in leaving here and there a "maladjustment." But can you conceive of a perfectly good and humane manager who sees faults in his arrangements, who has it in his power to remedy them and to avert all accident, and who also has it in his power to ensure all the characteristics he desires in passengers and staff without accidents, but who, nevertheless, prefers to carry out his ideas by "maladjustment"?

You cannot conceive of such a railway manager; but that is just your conception of the Creator if you think of Him as a Being who foresaw the dire anguish of such a world as this and deliberately planned it.

Let us try to conceive of the work of creation being carried out upon the plan of allowing a few maladjustments, as a method of evolving the greater good eventually. Let us in imagination get back to the "reign of Chaos and old Night." Let us suppose that this wondrous machine of which we and everything about us form parts is in process of conception in the mind of the Creator. The Almighty is pondering the idea of a universe, is brooding over the sublime project, shaping its lines, and, in thought, elaborating its details. The germ

of the whole vast system of things is about to be produced. A beneficent First Cause is about to initiate a world of dead matter and of sentient life to develop with it stage by stage. That it would begin in a rudimentary form, that the whole work of creation would be a growth, an unfolding, a development, an evolution, seems probable from everything we see around us. Growth appears to be the law of life everywhere. From the simple to the complex, from the rudimentary to the perfect, seems to be the order of creation wherever there is a living thing.

But shall this germ—or, if you prefer it, these germs—be absolutely perfect, pregnant with nothing but what shall evolve strength, beauty, health, happiness, the highest possible good in every form? Shall the new universe be good, and nothing but good? "Yes," must have been the resolve, if some of our philosophers are right—"yes, eventually; but not from the outset. There shall at first be rudimentary imperfections, initial flaws, that will for untold ages go on reproducing, developing, multiplying themselves. The law of heredity alone will ensure that, and the development of this rudimentary evil will be in geometric progression and will bring forth every possible combination of sorrow and suffering. But let the sorrow and the suffering produce their own remedies, work themselves out and finally come to an end." An end in what? Why, in absolute perfection, which, in the choice of a beneficent Creator, has been deliberately decided against. Ages upon ages of dreadful strife, of frightful suffering, of ruinous destruction, and then back to the perfect adjustment which might have been planned and secured from the earliest dawn of life!

Such a theory seems to me to be quite incredible. I should find it far easier to believe that the Creator shares with human intelligences those limitations of power and foresight that we find indicated in every creating, organising effort we see going on in the world around us—that God, though in an infinitely higher plane, is liable to error, deficient in foresight, needing the teaching of experience, exactly like the originator of a new department of the public service or the managing director of a railway. I should find it far easier to imagine that, until the great scheme of things began to unfold, the evil had been latent, and that it was only in the course of experience, so to speak, that the really tragic features of creation began to manifest themselves.

But this again is quite incredible. Even if we could suppose that "maladjustments" due to imperfection of power or lack of foresight were inherent in the work of the Creator from the first, how is it possible to doubt that as soon as the maladjustments began to be apparent they would have been rectified? To imagine that flaws and faults were deliberately planned from the first is quite impossible; it is to my mind equally impossible to believe that a beneficent God would have allowed the stupendous scheme to go on unfolding with its maladjustments uncorrected.

Think of that all-seeing eye watching the dawn of life just breathed into dead matter, and as the sublime system develops detecting the first symptoms of disorder. The fiat has gone forth, and the laws that are to sway through all the boundless realms of space are promulgated. The dead matter of this earth of ours has loomed up out of the black-

ness of the awful void, and the first glimmering of life has dawned upon it. Imagine the Creator looking down upon the embryo earth, and the germinal life with which it is to teem, and the natural laws laid down for the ordering of it all, and seeing that there was a certain slight want of fitness and correspondence—that the living thing was not quite adapted to its environment. The working of the new system of things is indeed all but perfect. But these ominous flaws, trifling but portentous maladjustments! Here and there living things die prematurely for want of food, or their lives are rendered miserable and their health impaired by extremes of heat or cold. The law of gravitation, though all-sufficient and perfectly well adapted to the particles and the masses of mere inert matter, sometimes through the very instrumentality of matter works great suffering to sentient creatures. Imagine the horror and dismay with which the swift keen glance of Omniscience would flash along the pathway of the future and see the awful tragedy unfold. Only some slight and insignificant infusion of evil, but the Creator's own laws of life and progress and heredity will go on expanding and developing it to the unutterable misery of unborn myriads, and as time runs on, the most hideous diseases, the fiercest passions, the most deadly and destructive strife, the darkest superstitions, the most revolting cruelties—every phase and form of evil that have racked and tormented the world lie out before that prescient gaze. To see it all coming, to take in the full measure of all the anguish and the horror of the world's evil, to know that He Himself had called it all forth, and to let it all go on—why, the thing is unthinkable. He

would have seen at a glance the whole sad sequel. He would have corrected those maladjustments, or He would have put His foot upon the frightful thing and have crushed it out of existence and have started again.

Since writing the last sentence my eye has been caught by the following eloquent passage by a Doctor of Divinity in the *Christian World*:—

"When an artist sets to work on a picture, the first thing he sees is the last touch. The end exists in his mind before the beginning; the root comes after the flower. He never would begin his work if he did not first behold its finish. It is the completed form that moves him. He gazes on the summer while it is yet spring. It is not too much to say that his first is produced by his last. Through the gloom there glitters the glory. His eye rests not on the foundations; if it did he would stop in disgust, abandon in despair. He sees nothing but the goal. Across the blots and blemishes there gleams the finished face—the face without a flaw. He is inspired by things not seen as yet. It is the light of to-morrow that leads him through the clouds of to-day; the last is the first. And so, my Father, it is with Thee. . . . Thine has been the artist's joy—the joy of the hour unborn, the joy of the day undawned, the joy of the beauty unrevealed, the joy of the light that is to be. Thou hast marched to the strains of future music. Thou hast guided the world by the glow of its latest sun."

Now this is all very fine, but it altogether ignores the alleged omnipotence of the Supreme Being. It takes no heed of the fact that the blots and the blemishes are just as much His own creation as the

glitter and the glory. It is true that an artist attains perfection only through much toil, and it may be even through suffering, which he cheerfully endures, because "through the gloom there glitters the glory." But what would you say of the wisdom of the artist who had it in his power to attain his goal easily and pleasantly and yet preferred the toil and the suffering? Foolish and morbid, do you say? Ay, no doubt. But what would you think not only of the wisdom but of the beneficence of that artist who should thus needlessly plod on through toil and suffering towards his goal of perfection, though to produce every spot of colour in his picture a thousand populous cities had been laid waste, and every touch of his pencil involved torture for untold millions of people? What would you think of the artist who could calmly work on towards his ideal, quite unmoved by the cries of an agonised world appealing to him for mercy and help? Grand in the colossal strength and calm of his cruelty? Ay, ay. But what do you think of the theology that presents such a being to our gaze and claims for him not only our admiring dread but our loving trust and reverence? Theology, it will perhaps be said, and as regards much of it no doubt quite truly, does not consciously do anything of the kind. The truth is that it does not think the thing out, and if one article of its creed is found to involve anything unpleasant it is quite capable of disposing of the unpleasantness by adding a second article totally inconsistent with the first and calmly swallowing both. In their fervour, good people of course unhesitatingly attribute to the Creator absolute omnipotence. But when you point out that that absolute omnipotence makes Him responsible for all

the dreadful things that are daily happening in the world, they will placidly tell you that these things happen because they are inevitably necessary. God has certain wise purposes to attain, and He cannot attain them without these things. And you cannot convince them that the two articles of their creed are mutually destructive.

We are not all of us gifted with such comfortable digestive powers. We are unable to suppose that these "maladjustments" were deliberately designed, because if we are to suppose that, we find it impossible to believe in the perfect goodness of the Creator. We are unable to regard these maladjustments as mere imperfections of workmanship. We find it incredible that a Being capable of contriving a universe so full of perfection as we see this to be should be incapable of avoiding these flaws and faults in the original work of creation, or at all events of correcting them when the effects of them first became apparent. If there is but one power in the universe, the riddle presented by the facts of the world around us is wholly and hopelessly insoluble. But if there is a second power, and that power sufficiently potent to disturb the divinely-intended order of things—too potent to be readily subdued and overcome, then the case becomes comparatively intelligible, and this I hope presently to make clearer.

CHAPTER V

"BUT FOR A MOMENT"

ONE very favourite and familiar argument adduced by way of explaining a faulty creation takes the form of a comparison between the brevity of evil and the eternity of good which is to follow. It is true that when God created the world He must have foreseen all the evil that would evolve with it. But He also foresaw that beyond this brief preliminary stage of imperfect evolution would come unending ages of life perfectly free from all touch of sorrow and suffering—an endless experience of perfect existence, compared with which this little nightmare of sin and suffering will dwindle into absolute insignificance and unimportance.

That comparative view of things may do for you and me, but it will not do from the standpoint of Omniscience and Omnipotence. A thing is not made less by comparing it with something greater. It is merely our impression of it that is less. It is only our mental infirmity that disenables us fully to realise the greatness of a thing because it is overshadowed by something greater. We cannot well take in more than one vivid impression at the same time. A Napoleon Buonaparte may have his mind

so steadfastly fixed on a grand scheme of glory and ambition as to be incapable of realising all the horror of the protracted warfare necessary to the carrying out of that scheme. But that does not render the horror less horrible; it only shows the limitation of his mental and moral nature. You cannot ascribe such limitation to the Creator. We know comparatively little about the evil and the suffering of the world, and all that has been transpiring in the history of the planet. By far the greater part of that history we know absolutely nothing about, and of the very few years of which we may be said to have any sort of knowledge, that knowledge is of the most fragmentary, imperfect, and illusory character. Of all the dread mysteries of superstition, the horrors of savage life, the ravages of disease, of famine, of warfare, and of the frightful forces of the natural world, what we know is only an infinitesimal part. It is probably the merest momentary glimpse into the whole. And yet we know enough to make the stoutest heart quail and cower at times in sickening dismay. I am not forgetting that I have argued that happiness is an infinitely more potent factor in the world's progress than pain—that happiness is, in fact, the general rule and pain the exception. That I believe to be a most certain truth. Nevertheless the aggregate of suffering for the whole world and for all time is something appalling to try to think of. Take any minute portion of the earth's surface and go a little closely into its history, if it has a recorded history. Take even the little kingdom of Scotland. There is enough fiendish cruelty in the history of the warfare of its clans to make one shudder to ponder over. I suppose almost every feudal castle in Europe

has been at times the centre of scenes of bloodshed and torture of indescribable ferocity, and that sort of thing has been going on more or less all over the earth's surface through weary ages of which nobody can even approximately tell the number.

You and I, knowing next to nothing of all this, and being very imperfectly endowed with a capacity for taking in two great ideas at once, may reflect on eternity to come until what we know of the world around us and of its past history becomes a thing of light and trivial importance compared with what may be beyond. But depend upon it the sleepless eyes that have watched the awful tragedy unfold from beginning to end cannot be dazzled and blinded to its absolute enormity by any comparison with what is to follow. He whose heart has grieved over the long agonies of a sorrow-smitten world through countless ages, whose glance has pierced into every dungeon, whose ear has listened to every cry of agony, and whose memory is as unfailing as His foresight is perfect, cannot in any possible sense make light of the world's anguish.

"No," you say, "of course He cannot; but that is not what we mean. God does not make light of the world's suffering. Certainly not. No doubt the Supreme Being has an infinitely larger apprehension, a vaster knowledge, a keener realisation of the world's sorrow than we can possibly have. But He permits it all, awful as He knows it to be, because it is working out a heaven beyond which will infinitely outweigh it, and it is the only way in which that heaven can be worked out."

I have already contended that it is a total fallacy to suppose that suffering is the only way by which

human development can be brought about. In ten thousand ways the Creator is doing it by the very reverse of this all around us, and if there is really any hope of a happy existence hereafter, that very hope refutes the supposition that such griefs and afflictions, such bereavements and disappointments, such thwartings and privations as have to be endured in this world are really essential to sound and healthy development of human nature. In their pious desire "to justify the ways of God to men" good people take a curiously one-sided view of sorrow and suffering in their effect upon men and women and children. Here is a mother who has lost a child. Maternity was the most natural, the most powerful, the most beautiful instinct of her nature. And it seemed to have been gratified in perfection. The beauty, the brightness, the clinging, trustful love of her child seemed just what the womanly nature wanted. Sunbeams seemed brighter when they lit up the face of her child, music was more musical when it set the small feet pattering, and buttercups and daisies seemed to have a special purpose in the world when her little one was out in the green fields to pick them. The love between that mother and child seemed to gild the universe with a fresh lustre and radiance. But death came by a frightful accident or a loathsome disease, and took away the child; and there are a good many theologians who will tell her that it has been done for her higher good; that it is a loving discipline; that she had set her heart too much on the child, and that God had removed it in order that she might be induced to set her affections on things above. One does not hear quite so much of this definite sort of teaching now as

formerly. The more thoughtful of theologians are apt to display a certain vague agnosticism on the subject. There must, they feel, be some explanation, but what it is they are less ready to assert than they were. But more or less definitely such occurrences are still held to be "dispensations of Providence," and somehow designed for good. In her pious submission the poor mother perhaps tries hard to believe what she is told; and as a matter of mere observation there can be no denying that very often the most beautiful traits of character are unfolded as the result of the sorrow. By many good people these traits are piously accepted as the very object and purpose for which the suffering was inflicted. The gain is very apparent, but what the woman has lost by the death of her child is quite overlooked. By the dreadful blow that has fallen on her, and the darkness and the misery that have enveloped her, she has been rendered patient and gentle, tender and sympathetic, wiser, deeper, better in every way. But is it quite certain that all this might not have been attained by a less steep and thorny path? She might have enjoyed the affectionate companionship, the community of interest, the care and devotion of a son or a daughter for half a century—fifty years of quiet, placid friendship of the purest and most disinterested kind. Is there no purifying influence in family ties? Have the love and affection of those about us no power to lift the heart in gratitude to heaven, and to make life gentle and sweet? You would as soon think of asking whether sunbeams have any power to ripen fruit. But all that has been quite cut off—a thousand possibilities of unfolding character, of widening

experience and mutual helpfulness and affection quite blotted out. Is all that to count for nothing? Is it, after all, quite so certain that, if a balance of advantage and disadvantage were struck, there would be any preponderance in favour of the fierce discipline of suffering as compared with the mellowing influence of long quiet years of affectionate friendship? Results would be somewhat different, no doubt. Very possibly the character and personality might appear less "saintly"; but, after centuries of ecclesiastical art and literature, even our ideas of what is "saintly" may require some rectification. It may be that round faces are just as saintly as long ones, and that bright spirits, and clear eyes, and rosy cheeks, and the healthy glow of happiness may be more in harmony with the will of heaven, more consistent with the highest type of piety and the greatest depth of healthy thought and feeling, than many an ideal we have borrowed from the cloister and the illuminated missal.

But however this may be, it must be allowed to be a fact patent and undisputed by all reasonable persons that great sorrows often have a deepening, strengthening, spiritualising effect on character. But does that prove that the Almighty Himself has sent those sorrows for the sake of those effects? Certainly not. It proves that good may come out of evil, and it proves nothing else. As to the source of the evil, it shows nothing at all. It proves that the occurrence of evil in its worst forms cannot altogether conceal from healthy natures the gentle purposes of life. Whatever may be the origin of that evil, the effect of it is perfectly natural, if we may assume the existence of a supreme Spirit of benignity watching

every human soul with paternal interest. If we may judge of the probable action of that supreme Spirit by what one knows of the best and noblest spirits around us, that effect of sorrow is perfectly natural, and, in a sense, perfectly intelligible. So far from its being a proof that the Supreme Ruler Himself has sent the cruel affliction, if we balance probabilities in a perfectly scientific spirit, I say that there is a distinct presumption the other way. Take the case of that woman again. She has an only daughter, and every fibre of the maternal nature is twined about the bairn. But she sends her out one windy day, and a branch of a tree falls and horribly crushes the child. I have a specific case of the kind in my mind as I write. There is at first an outburst of fierce rebellion, of passionate protest, against such "Providence"; but it is soon followed by broken-hearted submission, as the utter impotency and use-lessness of revolt come to be realised. The woman's heart sinks under a crushing sense of irreparable bereavement, and cries out for help and sympathy. And if there is anywhere in the universe a pitiful, benignant Spirit who has entered fully into that mother's love for her child—has, in fact, designed it for her, and knows all about her sorrow—what can be more natural, what can be more scientifically probable, than that great pitying Spirit should, in ways that her nature and condition permit, afford her some sustaining sense of His pity and nearness? It is just what kindly, sympathetic souls all around her are doing. It is the most natural, the most probable thing in the world, and it is the more probable if we may suppose that that destructive blow was really no part of Providential design, but

rather a thwarting of the Divine purpose of the development and training of that woman's nature by natural love and happiness. If it is possible to suppose that anything could be needed to stimulate and quicken Divine pity and sympathy—to keep up the analogy for a moment between the human and the Divine—it would be just that touch of indignation at a total perversion of benign natural laws to purposes of ghastly tragedy. What I mean by this I hope to make clearer a little farther on.

The suffering mother has undergone a spiritualisation, a softening, a sensitising. She is purer and stronger and better for her suffering, not because of the suffering, but because of a new consciousness of sympathy given and received. Suffering itself is evil, and nothing but evil. It depresses and discourages; it weakens and destroys. People suffer and they degenerate, just as naturally and inevitably as plants degenerate in cold and gloom and ungenial conditions. Primarily that is the universal tendency. It is only when the broken spirit, in its distress, becomes conscious that it is breathing in an atmosphere of sympathy, that the great heart of the universe is throbbing in suffering with it, that in spite of everything it begins to rise and exult even in affliction. All that is true and sensitive is drawn out and strengthened by this sense of a wider communion of spirit. Common experience, common needs, bring men together, give them a sympathetic understanding of each other, and lead them up to a common Father. It is just here—not in suffering but in sympathy—lies the heart of the great mystery of evil in its power to benefit.

I am presently going to argue that there is a

sympathy of happiness, and that if the world were as the Creator, I cannot doubt, originally designed it, this sympathy of happiness would have been the only and all-sufficient developing force. It is just as real as the sympathy of suffering, and in a perfect world it would be infinitely more potent.

CHAPTER VI

SATAN FROM A SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW

As regards "maladjustments," there are three hypotheses from which you are free to choose, and, so far as I can see, there is no fourth.

You may hold that the Creator deliberately designed them. They were part and parcel of His scheme. He might have made the universe without them, but He chose not to do so. That hypothesis does indeed leave quite unimpaired one's belief in the omnipotence of the Creator; but it, of course, renders Him directly and inevitably responsible for all the evil of the world, and, to my mind, renders it simply impossible to regard Him as a being of pure benevolence.

Or you may hold that these imperfections were no part of His scheme. They were undesigned, the mere unavoidable faults and flaws incidental to a stupendous scheme. By that hypothesis the Creator is still left with the full responsibility for all the evils of the world, but it may be urged that it was unavoidable. It was not His design or intention. He meant the world to be perfect, and He is slowly correcting the maladjustments. This leaves unimpaired the Creator's character for beneficence, but it

obviously detracts from the omnipotence and omniscience ascribed to Him.

Thirdly, you may hold with the writer of the Book of Genesis that the Creator, when He framed this majestic scheme, was actuated by perfect beneficence, by absolute goodness, and loving-kindness; that He actually called into being a universe without any element of evil, without flaws or faults, and that He made it subject to the operation of laws so perfect in their adjustment, one with another, that nothing but good and happiness could possibly have resulted. In perfect goodness and perfect power and wisdom He made it all. But an enemy disturbed the nice adjustment of things.

Before attempting to discuss that disturbance of adjustment, let us consider what sort of an enemy it probably was.

Milton and Goethe have afforded us considerable assistance in approximating to some extent to a more rational conception of Satan than has generally prevailed among those who have believed in such a being. Nobody who has read *Paradise Lost* can ever again think of Satan as the petty and contemptible being depicted in medieval pictures and represented in medieval pageants. The devil with horns and tail and cloven hoofs, brandishing a pitchfork, may no doubt be relegated to the realms of myth. He has been made so supremely ridiculous that nobody can believe in him. But the devil as the original source of all that is evil in the world, the devil as the arch-enemy of the Creator, the devil as the second most powerful personality in the universe, he is certainly not to be so dismissed except on the most serious and substantial ground, and I

venture to think he is less likely to be as we come more clearly to understand spiritual force in the realms of life.

If I quote Milton in an attempt to depict Satan, I shall be sure to be told that my quotations are merely the fanciful speculations of a poet and are of no serious value. But if we are to study the subject at all, it can of course be only in a speculative, hypothetical way, and on such a subject the speculations of so sublime a genius as John Milton, to say the least of it, may be quite as worthy of respectful consideration as the cosmical theories of some of our scientists. Let us at all events take them for what they are worth.

Milton's conception of Satan and his associates is that of beings endowed with the loftiest intellects and a degree of creative power that can hardly be distinguished from what we must assume to be that of the First Great Cause Himself. To give but one illustration: The infernal Powers and Potentates, after their final rout and expulsion from heaven, are about to hold a council, and a council-chamber is required.

> Let those
> Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell
> Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
> Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,
> And strength, and art, are easily outdone
> By spirits reprobate; and in an hour
> What in an age they with incessant toil
> And hands innumerable scarce perform.

There is sudden and swift preparation, and

> Anon, out of the earth a fabric huge
> Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
> Of dulcet symphonies, and voices sweet;

Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars, overlaid
With golden architrave: nor did there want
Cornice, or frieze, with bossy sculptures grav'n:
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,
Nor great Alcairo, such magnificence
Equall'd in all their glories, to enshrine
Belus, or Serapis, their gods; or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury.

Satan himself, as depicted by Milton, is a figure of stupendous grandeur and majesty:

He, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tow'r: his form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Archangel ruin'd, and th' excess
Of glory obscur'd: as when the sun, new ris'n,
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams; or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs: darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all th' Archangel: but his face
Deep scars of thunder had entrench'd; and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge.

And again:

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind;
Or where the gorgeous East, with richest hand,
Show'rs on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence.

One is strongly tempted to dwell at some length on Milton's splendid delineation of the arch-enemy of the Creator; but I wish as far as I am able to

avoid anything like mere poetic flights of fancy, and to confine myself to arguments based, if not exactly on matters of fact, at least on probabilities suggested by the world around us or what we know of the universe at large. I therefore quote Milton chiefly to suggest that the imaginings of the blind poet probably fall as far short of the real Satan as the boldest conceptions of a finite intellect must be expected to fall short of what is to us practically infinite, and that even his majestic creations would appear puny and insignificant by comparison with any adequate representation of the awful and mysterious entity from whom the poet—perhaps with no less truth than grandeur—has made to emanate the tragic resolve :

> Farewell hope ! and with hope farewell fear.
> Farewell remorse ! all good to me is lost :
> Evil be thou my good !

If we may assume—at least for purposes of argument—that the Creator of the universe is engaged in a struggle with some power of evil, it must follow, of course, that that power must be of a nature akin to His own ; that is to say, it must be a spiritual power of similar faculties, and the fact that the struggle has been waging for untold ages shows that it is a force in some measure approximating to that of the Supreme Being Himself. This is no petty and ridiculous phantom with nothing more important to do than to torment old ladies or to harass such men as Martin Luther in the Wartburg. It is a god-like being with creative and administrative powers, with intellectual resources, with knowledge and foreknowledge probably inferior only to those

of the Creator Himself, but actuated by malignity instead of goodness:

> All good to me is lost:
> Evil be thou my good!

Now to imagine a perfectly designed universe is to imagine a scheme not only of awful sublimity, but of infinite intricacy and complexity, and of the most exquisite delicacy of balance and adjustment. You have only to assume that, while such a system of things was being planned and evolved, a being such as I have endeavoured to depict was looking on, and, in a certain sense at least, it is easy to conceive of what may have taken place. You and I may talk of natural laws, but we do not in the least understand them. We do not know what are "laws" or how they are imposed or maintained. We know that any two bodies in the solar system attract each other just in proportion to their mass, but how they do it we none of us have the faintest conception. But this arch-enemy would understand all about it. In just the same way, though not to the same extent, he could probably impose his will on the elementary particles of matter. He, too, is a spiritual potentate and can lay down laws, and would understand perfectly well how one law could be made to modify or balance another, and how adjustments may be disturbed. All the stupendous intricacies of the new system, all the sublime possibilities inherent in primordial matter lie open to his god-like perception. "Evil be thou my good." And he malignantly resolves that it shall *not* work out as intended. To entirely upset the stupendous project must be beyond him. He cannot wreck it; he cannot even seriously mar the

scheme. But what it may be possible for him to do in the way of unsettling the balance, and disturbing the absolutely perfect adjustment of things, he will do.

Now you may say that all this is fantastic, that it is purely imaginary, that there is nothing within our ken to justify such speculations. I say that it is not altogether fantastic, that it is not purely imaginary, and that ten thousand facts given us by the latest science of the day testify to the credibility of the supposition that at the day-dawn of creation, or shortly after, some such disturbance as it would have been in the power of such a being to produce did actually take place. There are the maladjustments. There is no manner of doubt about that, and you must ascribe them either to God or to some other spiritual power. If you admit the creative power and the beneficence of a God, I cannot for the life of me see why you may not admit the possibility of the existence, the power, and the malevolence of a devil, and I maintain that all the probabilities are in favour of the assumption that the maladjustments in the scheme of creation are due to the agency of Satan, and are in no way to be ascribed either to the indifference or the insufficiency, or, worse than all, to the deliberate purpose of the Creator. That there is a conflict between good and evil raging all around us and within us is only too evident. That the good is the stronger force of the two is a fact to which I think even the most pessimistic of scientists must feel himself compelled to testify. Indeed, so far as I know, no scientific man ever thinks of disputing that the evolutionary movements of nature are all upwards—that in the long

run the better is, and always has been, getting the upper hand of the worse, and that the good is continually eliminating the evil. But that the power that makes for evil is a truly awful one is, of course, indisputable, if we assume that it is really waging prolonged warfare with the Supreme, and baffling—at least temporarily—the purposes of Omniscience itself. I do not see what is gained in precision of thought or intelligibility or in credibility by talking of principles of good and evil. It seems to me just as reasonable to regard the phenomena of creation as the outcome of conflicting principles embodied in two personalities, and such a view of things leaves mankind free to regard one as wholly good and the other wholly bad.

CHAPTER VII

NATURAL LAWS AND HUMAN LAWS

HAVING endeavoured in some slight degree to realise the disturbing power in the universe, let us turn next to some consideration of the system of things upon which that disturbing influence was brought to play.

The wider and the deeper becomes our knowledge of that system, the clearer it becomes that it is a system of laws. They prevail everywhere. Every vibration of mind as well as every particle of matter seems to be under the domination of laws of which we have as yet probably only a very imperfect realisation. As to how these laws are imposed or how they are maintained, we know nothing. We only know that the loftier the standpoint from which we survey the universe, the greater reason we find for believing that from the dread magnificence of their sweep nothing escapes, and it is a growing perception of this that has of late years rendered it so difficult for all thoughtful minds to accept anything in the way of miracle.

But though we have grown more and more familiar with the idea of the reign of law everywhere, the popular mind at all events has made but little

advance in the apprehension of what is implied in it. Most people's ideas of the laws of God are pretty much the same as their ideas of the laws of Parliament. They see that, however good and beneficent a Parliament-made law may be, it never can and never does fit all cases. It will be sure to work hardship and injustice to somebody, and they are not at all surprised therefore that Nature's laws do the same. There are exceptions, they say, to all rules, and looking out upon the working of great natural laws, it certainly does appear that the aphorism may be applied to them as to all other rules. The laws of God and the laws of men seem to be alike in this, that though they may be good and beneficent in their purpose and general application, there are exceptional cases in which they necessarily work evil.

But this general analogy is most delusive. It serves to hide from the superficial gaze differences of the most vital and momentous kind. Did you ever try to realise a perfect law? "We frame our rules for general application," said a member of the London School Board to me recently; "we can't expect to make them apply satisfactorily in every case." Why cannot they? Simply, of course, because they do not know how to do it. When they are framing their rules they do not know what the exceptional cases may be, and if they did know they, perhaps, would not know how to adapt their rules to them. Moreover, if they could make their rules perfectly applicable to every case to-day, they would still have no knowledge of what might crop up to-morrow. The wiser they are, the more completely they understand the circumstances for which they are legislating, and

the more skill and foresight they can bring to bear upon the matter, the better will be their law, the fewer exceptions there will be to its satisfactory working, and the more general will be the good resulting from it. But at the very best, probably no human law of general application was ever yet framed perfectly adapted to every case that came under it.

Now, as this is the fact with the laws of a School Board, a County Council, or a Parliament, people very readily fall in with the idea that exceptions to the beneficent working of the vast natural laws dominating the whole realm of created things must, of course, be expected. The law of gravitation has an application so inconceivably vast, that an exception to its beneficent working here and there is nothing surprising. All laws have these exceptions. The general working is quite in harmony with the goodness and beneficence of God. A comparatively trivial accident here and there must be regarded as inevitable, just as occasionally we have to deplore the unfortunate effect of some highly beneficial Act of Parliament. The parallel seems complete.

But between the Act of Parliament and a natural law there is really all the difference between the finite and the infinite. The Act of Parliament is the outcome of only a limited knowledge of the present, very little knowledge of the past, and scarcely any knowledge of the future. It has been framed by very imperfect wisdom, very partial and qualified beneficence, and it has to be carried out by all sorts of agencies extremely varied in character and qualifications. But just conceive, if you can, of a law framed by absolute wisdom and perfect goodness. Conceive

of a law framed not only with a complete knowledge of all the past and all the future, but with the power to order and control and arrange that future—the power not only to adapt laws to circumstances, but circumstances to laws ; to make one fit into the other with absolute perfection. Imagine that the very object of the law is the entire happiness of all created things, and that it is carried out by Omnipotence itself. Perfect goodness, perfect wisdom, perfect power, and where is the loophole for the smallest conceivable exception to the benevolent working of such a law? Throughout the whole universe there is literally no room for such an occurrence as we have been referring to in a previous chapter—the falling of the branch of a tree and the crushing of a happy and beautiful child, to the horror and distraction of a loving mother. A human law approaches perfection just in proportion as it adapts itself to exceptional cases and secures the benefit intended under varying circumstances ; and an absolutely perfect law would leave not the slightest exceptional case unprovided for. Everything intended to come within the scope of the law would come under it, and if the end and purpose of it were nothing but good and happiness, nothing but good and happiness could result. God has ordained—somehow ordained — the law of gravitation, and from end to end of His realm, so far as we know, there is not the smallest particle of matter which does not obey. It brings to the earth the minutest mote of dust, and it holds the earth to the sun, and binds the sun to the remotest star that our telescopes can reach. The great law fulfils its primary purpose with absolute perfection.

Now it is impossible to conceive of a Creator of infinite benevolence framing such a law without reference to the welfare of myriads upon myriads of His sentient creatures. It must have been framed for their well-being quite as much, to say the least of it, as for the proper ordering of molecules and mountain rocks. As a matter of fact it does work for their welfare almost invariably ; but just once in many millions of times it not only fails to promote their welfare, but it works frightful suffering and wholesale destruction. It brings down a branch to crush a happy and innocent child ; it hurls an avalanche upon a peaceful village ; it floods a teeming valley and sweeps a whole population to destruction ; or it overwhelms a congregation beneath the walls and roof of the building within which they have assembled to supplicate their Creator's blessing and protection. As a general rule it holds a man comfortably and safely on the earth. It is beautifully adjusted to his muscular strength. Almost universally the law works as perfectly for the happiness of sentient life upon the globe as it does for the security of the material world. But here are these frightful exceptions. How are they to be accounted for? So far as we know, it *never* works to the detriment of mere matter ; but it often operates disastrously for the higher, organic developments of creation, and most disastrously for the highest of them all—the bodies and souls of men. And yet, even for them, the exceptions to its beneficent working are, comparatively speaking, almost infinitesimally small. When we consider the all but invariable working of this law for the good of mankind, the desire of the Creator that it should operate absolutely without ex-

ception seems well-nigh certain. If that really was the desire, why were these exceptions not provided against? Is it because they were not foreseen? In that case the Creator cannot be omniscient. Is it because, although they were foreseen, there was no possibility of providing against them? If so, God is not omnipotent. Or was it that, although they were foreseen and could have been prevented, the Creator deliberately left these "maladjustments"—deliberately planned these tragedies? If it was so, how can the Creator be wholly beneficent?

I have taken only one great natural law for illustration, but of course there are others that in just the same way almost invariably work in perfect beneficence, but do occasionally result in frightful suffering. The laws of chemical affinity are wonderful beyond measure in their operation for the beauty and fruitfulness of the material world and for the health and happiness of human life. Yet these laws now and then operate as though human life were simply of no account and human anguish incapable of effecting the slightest ripple in the great calm about the Supreme Ruler. Chemical affinity takes the particle of food and converts it into nourishment and warmth for the human frame. But chemical affinity ruthlessly burns down the house full of shrieking inmates holding up their tortured limbs to Heaven for mercy. We know now that even the winds move in subordination to great laws which ordinarily bring health and enjoyment to all living things. But every now and again the winds come laden with pestilence, or in devastating fury, sweeping the terror-stricken earth with a besom of destruction.

These laws are not only so manifestly intended to

promote health and happiness, and do, as a matter of unquestionable fact, operate in that way to an extent so inconceivably greater than in the reverse, that it seems almost absurd to question the goodness of the Creator. It cannot be the will of the Almighty that pain and suffering should exist, either, from any indifference. The whole plan of creation, so far as we can see it, renders any such supposition absurd. Nor, as I have already argued, can it be maintained that these exceptions to the general beneficence are designed for a greater good. That greater good does not always follow, and if it did, it could be attained in other ways.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LIMITS OF NECESSARY SUFFERING

NOW I must not be supposed to be so infatuated with the theory I am propounding as to be incapable of seeing the difficulties by which it is beset. I know that there are difficulties, and some of them we shall presently consider. I have looked at them carefully all round, and though I admit their gravity, they are not to my mind at all comparable to the one overwhelming difficulty of imagining a Creator of perfect goodness and wisdom and power deliberately establishing laws to go on age after age producing the direst evils.

It appears to me to be far more reasonable to believe that the natural laws under which the whole system of creation was designed to unfold would be framed for the complete happiness of life throughout the universe, entirely without exception, and that when those laws were likely to work the smallest particle of evil, one of two things—possibly both—would have happened: either their operation would have been subject to modification, or the creatures for whose welfare they were designed would have been found to be endowed with some special powers of resistance or adaptation. It might have been

that the very fact that they were tending towards evil would have abrogated or modified their action by the operation of some other law.

This may not improbably strike you as mere visionary speculation. Such abrogation or modification you may be disposed to regard as altogether unnatural. But just look at one or two interferences by which you actually are protected from the most serious evils.

You are no doubt aware that, by a great natural law, when you apply heat to any substance, either solid or fluid or gaseous, that substance expands, and when you withdraw the heat it contracts. That law, like all other natural laws, no doubt was intended for universal good, and generally speaking it works for good and nothing but good. But here is a marvellous fact. There is one portion of the physical world in which this law of expansion and contraction would clearly work the gravest mischief, and we find at once that the rule is not merely modified, it is actually reversed. I refer, of course, to the well-known phenomena of the expansion and contraction of water. Down to a certain temperature water, like all other bodies, contracts by cold. Like everything else, it becomes denser and heavier as it grows colder, and if, like everything else, it continued to do so right down the scale, it would have this disastrous effect perhaps among a good many others. Ice formed on the surface of water would be a trifle heavier than the water beneath it. It would gradually settle down to the bottom. Another coating of ice would be formed and would go down on the top of the first, and so on until our ponds and lakes and streams were masses of solid ice. Summer's heats would be

all insufficient to undo the work of the winter's frost, and every living thing in our waters would perish. The very seas over a large portion of the earth would be solid, and all animal and vegetable life, if not actually destroyed, would be totally altered in character. The globe itself, wherever frost touches it, would undergo changes of which perhaps we can only very imperfectly realise the extent.

It looks as though the eye of Omniscience had detected this peril and had recognised the necessity of providing against it. Accordingly, if you watch closely, you will find that, as water cools down towards freezing point, the contraction by cold gradually ceases and expansion begins. By the time the water has become ice it has become specifically lighter, and instead of settling down to the bottom it has become more buoyant than the fluid and floats on the top, thus preventing the solidification of the water, and, instead of destroying, actually protecting from the extremity of winter cold the animal and vegetable life below.

Take another case equally familiar to all who have the smallest acquaintance with elementary science—a case in which there is no modification or reversal of a law, but in which a natural law of general operation is counteracted by another, introduced seemingly for the specific purpose of averting the evils that would otherwise result.

Water, as it has just been said, and as everybody knows, when it is cooled down to about 32 degrees becomes ice; and ice subjected to a temperature a little above 32 degrees becomes fluid again. That is a natural law prevailing universally. But if this law operated without any kind of counteracting check,

the effect would often be disastrous in the extreme. If the change from the fluid to the solid or from the solid to the fluid came about with the mere raising or dropping of the temperature a little above or a little below 32 degrees, tremendous volumes of water would be almost instantaneously solidified into ice, and the ice might presently be reconverted into water with equal rapidity. The consequences would often be ruinous in the extreme. Mountains, for instance, that had been for months accumulating snow upon their summits and slopes would be liable suddenly to let loose deluges that would wreck the world below.

Here again it looks as though the tremendous risks of sudden change were clearly foreseen and effectually guarded against. The law of latent heat comes into operation and the cataclysms that would result from the instantaneous melting of millions upon millions of tons of snow upon uplands and mountains are entirely averted. This law is as impenetrable in its mystery as the law of gravitation or of chemical affinity. So far as we know, it has no operation whatever except as a subsidiary law moderating and regulating the operation of a larger and a more general one. Science cannot in the least explain it. All it can tell us is that when a solid becomes a fluid there is a certain amount of heat absorbed by the fluid, and when that fluid becomes solid again the heat that has been absorbed is given out. Thus if sunshine suddenly bursts out over a field of snow and raises the temperature of the air 5, 10, or 15 degrees above freezing point, the snow does not instantaneously disappear, as it would do by the operation of the first law by which water becomes a solid at 32 degrees and a fluid at anything above that. What does

happen is that the solid begins to melt into a fluid, but in the very process of conversion from a solid to a fluid the water absorbs the warmth of the air close to it. What becomes of the warmth nobody can tell us. It simply disappears, becomes latent and inoperative within the fluid. The closest scrutiny with the thermometer cannot detect the slightest effect of the heat that has been absorbed. By greedily sucking in a large proportion of the warmth of the surrounding air, the fluid has managed to keep down the temperature at a point only just a little above freezing, and the melting goes on slowly and safely. The snow gradually melts, and then perhaps the sun goes down, and the temperature falls 5 or 10 degrees below freezing point, and processes are reversed. The fluid becomes a solid, but, lest this change again should be dangerously sudden, and by the expansion of frost, mountains should be rent asunder as though torn by an angry giant, the fluid, as it changes into the solid, rapidly gives out the heat it so rapidly absorbed. The temperature of the surrounding air is thus maintained at a point only a little below freezing, and the process of solidification is safe and gradual.

Now these are very familiar and quite indisputable instances of the actual averting of mischiefs which the ordinary working out of great natural laws would bring about. These laws are amazing in the unerring precision with which they operate, and in the beneficence with which they ordinarily affect this earth of ours and the sentient life upon it. But here are the exceptions to that beneficent action, and at once we find them checked, arrested, reversed, or modified by other laws.

"But," says the reader, "do you seriously mean to contend that under no circumstances could the law of gravitation or any other of Nature's laws ever have harmed a human being? 'Shall gravitation cease when you go by?' In your perfect world, if a rock should fall when a man happened to be under it, what would save that man from being crushed?"

I cannot tell. I could not have suggested the law of latent heat to save the man from being drowned if he happened to be under a snow-covered hill when the temperature suddenly rose one degree above freezing point. That gravitation should cease is perhaps not so inconceivable as Pope would evidently have supposed. I have said in a previous chapter that this law prevails universally throughout Nature. But this is not strictly correct. On the contrary, indeed, there is one extensive section of this natural world of ours in which even gravitation gives way to another law, because its ordinary operation would be incompatible with life. The rule is that particles of matter attract each other. That *is* the law of gravitation. But if this law were absolutely universal in its operation, the particles of which gases are composed—like all other particles —would be drawn together, and the air we breathe would be a physical impossibility. It would approximate to solid matter. The creation of an atmosphere required not exactly that gravitation should cease, but that matter should be capable of moving in direct opposition to it, and in the gaseous part of the natural world this actually takes place. The existence and diffusion of gases are due to the fact that the atoms of which they are composed, instead of attracting each other, have actually a repellent

power which tends to keep them as far as possible apart. Gravitation does indeed still retain its hold upon them, or they would fly off into space altogether. But within certain limits they appear to move in any direction quite independent of its power. Here, you see, you have what appears to be the very central law of the whole material universe not indeed "ceasing," but submissively giving way to another law. A molecule of dead matter is actually endowed with the power of resisting the law of gravitation, and yet, cries Pope, "Shall gravitation cease when you go by?"—*you*, at the very apex of creation, a body and soul, throbbing with life and quivering with sensibility, nearly akin to Divinity itself! Is it really so incredible that, if necessary, even gravitation should cease? The fact is that to creative energy these laws are nothing. They operate or they cease to operate; they work this way or that way just as circumstances may require.

This, at all events, seems clear—if something did not happen to save a man from being horribly crushed to death by a falling rock, it could be from no lack of power. The Being that made that rock and established and maintained that law of gravitation, and framed that man in all the wonderful intricacy and adaptation of his organism, could certainly have protected him from the effect of His own law if He had willed to do so. We are so familiar with such accidents, that we regard them as "natural." The fact is, if we take a wide and comprehensive view of things, they are really unnatural. Nature, as I have again and again said, everywhere shows overwhelming evidence of having been designed for the good of all living things, and the "natural" thing would be for

the laws of Nature to protect that man from injury. That they fail to do so shows that there is something wrong, just as it shows something wrong when a railway brake fails to act and a train rushes into a terminal station at a speed of fifty miles an hour. The crushing of that man would be evidence of some failure of beneficent law. How it is to be remedied I, of course, cannot tell. It should be carefully borne in mind that even a comparatively trivial initial disturbance in a scheme so complicated as that of creation may have had ultimate effects that it is quite impossible to gauge or estimate.

It is just conceivable that, at any rate, a vast proportion of the accidents to which we are exposed might have been avoided, not by modification of law in the physical world, but by an extremely keen sense of impending danger with which human beings in their highest perfection might have been endowed, and by the complete development of some of those marvellous powers of mind over matter which, I suppose, are hardly to be disputed at this time of day. With hypnotism actually recognised among the remedial resources of our hospitals, it seems hardly reasonable to question the reality of a psychic force, that in a perfect scheme of life might not inconceivably have been designed to neutralise the operation of the mere brute powers of Nature when they threatened injury or destruction to psychic beings. "We have five senses," says Sir John Lubbock, "and sometimes fancy that no others are possible. But it is obvious that we cannot measure the infinite by our own narrow limitations. We find in animals complex organs of sense richly supplied with nerves, but the functions of which we

are as yet powerless to explain. There may be fifty other senses as different from ours as sound is from sight; and even within the boundaries of our own senses there may be endless sounds which we cannot hear, and colours as different as red from green of which we have no conception." Volumes might be written—indeed volumes have been written—upon the marvellously keen sense of danger with which many of the inferior animals are endowed, and though, of course, it will be said that this sense has been evolved by constant exposure to peril pressing and imminent, such as could hardly be the case in the perfect world we are supposing, it is not inconceivable that human organisms in their highest perfection might have been endowed with so keen a sensitiveness of apprehension as never to have been taken unawares by natural laws. Who shall say that the very operation of those laws might not have afforded the safeguard against mischief by a natural necessity inseparably linked with their working?

But here I can imagine a thoughtful objector raising a difficulty. "What you have been urging about the modification of law may be very true," he may say, "but it is one general law working against another. The facts you have been giving are not illustrations of general laws reversed or modified to meet particular cases. That is Nature all over—

> So careful of the type she seems,
> So careless of the single life.

Your illustrations afford striking confirmation of that careful guardianship of the great system of things, but they do not in the least suggest the kind of individual protectorate of your perfect world. What

you seem to want is a system of beneficent general laws supplemented by perpetual miracle."

No; that is not so. I am not suggesting that, if the world had developed as I cannot doubt the Creator intended, it would have been the scene of perpetual miracle. Nothing of the kind.

Apparently the Supreme Being always works by law, and never apart from law. All the best of men do so too, and if you ever detect them lapsing from this, you instantly and instinctively regard it as a flaw, a weakness, an imperfection. They go, that is to say, on broad principles of action and conduct. The stronger the men, the purer their principles, the higher their mental and moral status, the more confident you feel that whatever they do will be in accordance with those principles. Now if you carry your thoughts upwards and think of supreme strength, supreme principle, supreme mental and moral status, it becomes, of course, impossible to think of action apart from principle—law that is. I will not go so far as to say that in the whole circle of things there can be nothing in the nature of "miracle." We do not, I think, know enough of the spheres of mind and matter to warrant any dogmatism on the point. But this may probably be said with great confidence, that perfectly adjusted laws would have developed a world in which miracle would have been wholly unnecessary. So long as your watch keeps perfect time, you would never think of meddling with its works. It is only when there is some little "maladjustment" that you find it necessary to resort to a "miraculous" movement of its hands. And while you take care to alter the hands by "miracle," you are well aware that the proper remedy for what is

wrong lies in the regulator. Perfectly adjust your regulator—your law,—and "miracle"—irregular action —may be quite dispensed with. If there is in Nature any element of the miraculous, it is to be found illustrated by that secondary law of latent heat. It comes in to secure the main end and object of all law—the welfare of the world and all that is in it. The physical and the moral forces of the universe run in perfectly parallel lines. They are both emanations from the same Deity, and the falling of a tree to crush a child is as much an evidence of disturbance of the proper order of the universe as when in the moral world the application of a right principle comes—as it often does—with a crushing weight of sorrow and suffering. Both are anomalies, and I hold that if the Creator's laws—in physical nature and in man—as they were originally ordained had worked out as they were intended, neither could have happened.

But here let me say a little upon a point to which I have previously alluded. I am urging the probability that the work of the Creator would have been perfect. But a world perfect as it evolves from the hand of the Creator need not be, and could not be, a world entirely void of all possibility of suffering. Nothing of the kind. I have before me a sermon which puts the matter very forcibly. "There are some things that omnipotence is not equal to, some things that are absurd, contradictory in the nature of things. God Himself could not create a race of creatures and place them on this earth, and deprive them of the possibility of suffering, and keep them here a year. Anything made to live in such conditions as we are in to-day is constantly

threatened by physical injury. A limb may be broken or torn off, one may fall over a precipice, life may be crushed out in any one of a thousand ways, one may eat something that will poison him, and so perish. We are in the midst of a play of forces that threaten injury and destruction. Suppose we have no sensitiveness to pain, that to have an arm broken or a leg pulled out, or the body crushed into a jelly, would not hurt: how long do you suppose a race of beings like that would exist? Ask any competent scientific man, and he will tell you that in a world like this a race of creatures that could not feel pain would die out in six months. So, if it is worth while to be alive at all, then we must pay the possibility of suffering as the condition of life itself.

"Take another step," continues the preacher. "I believe that every particle of necessary pain, unpreventable pain, is a token of the love, the care, the tenderness of the power that put us here. If we have a sensation of pain, it is a warning given to us in the only way in which it could be given to us, unless an angel were sent to give us the news, that something is wrong. It is the warning that a law has been broken. It is God's signal-mark of danger. 'Private way'—'Dangerous crossing,' or in any way you choose to figure it. It is God's method of telling you that you cannot safely walk along that path. If we could perfectly keep the laws of God, we should be perfectly free from suffering. The existence of pain is simply God's kindly warning that we have gone to the extreme limit of safety in that direction, and must guard ourselves and turn to another way."

Well now, all that is forcibly put, and much of it is very true. But some of it is quite untrue, and under all of it there is this fundamental fallacy. It makes no distinction between the suffering caused by a breach of law and the suffering which comes by the operation of law. Nature has, and necessarily has, a code of rules which you must obey. "If we could perfectly keep the laws of God," says the preacher, "we should be perfectly free from suffering." But that is not the fact. Wind or fire or earthquake or thunderbolt may maim you for life while you are sleeping peacefully in your bed. If, so long as you conform to the Creator's laws, you can be healthy and happy, and only incur pain and misery when you break those laws, you may confidently ascribe entire beneficence to the power that ordained them. If there were no suffering but such as originated in wilful infraction of law, it would be impossible to entertain a doubt that that law was ordained in perfect benignity. But the indictment against Nature is that the very operation of her law works frightful suffering. Those rules of hers sweep on like the car of Juggernaut. Men may get out of their way if they can, but if they *cannot* they are just as ruthlessly crushed as they are when they *will not*. As things are, the very processes of Nature involve suffering, and are carried on by means of it, and when you reply that that could not have been otherwise, I deny it flatly, and I am writing this book to justify that denial.

I see quite as clearly as the reader may do that in a perfect world, under a perfectly beneficent rule, the breaking of law would sometimes be inevitable, though unintentional. If the laws of mind, as well

as the world in which the minds were operative, were as perfect as I am supposing, there could be no wilful, intentional disobedience. To a rightly constituted mind an intentional breach of natural law must always be impossible—not, as I have said elswhere, because the thing is literally impossible, but because there would not be the smallest disposition to it. If you saw a man deliberately set at defiance the law of gravitation, nothing would persuade you that the man was rightly constituted in his mind. You would say at once that he was wrong in his head. You know that if he were right it would be impossible for him to do it. In just the same way a perfect man in a perfect world would never dream of wilfully breaking any of Nature's laws—physical, social, mental, moral—so far as he understood them.

But, of course, the thing might be done from a want of knowledge or from inadvertence, and I quite see that in the evolution of a race from a rudimentary condition a knowledge of natural laws could be acquired only, or at least mainly, by experience of the effect of breaking them. There must therefore be some suffering even in an ideal world. And, of course, it is indisputable that the very physical endowment which permits of pleasurable sensation necessarily involves the possibility of painful sensation also, and it is hardly to be supposed that in a world of incessant activity among free agents of limited knowledge and skill—agents who are only learning to understand and apply the tremendous forces of Nature—there could be entire immunity from accident. It is quite evident that the Creator might—in the purest beneficence—have attached the penalty of instant pain to any infraction of His law.

What is not conceivable is that such a Creator should have interwoven evil into His system, and made it an indispensable factor in its evolution—should have made evil the outcome of the very working of His law.

In a perfect world, then, I do not contend that no suffering would have been possible. But I do contend—1st, that, compared with what we see now, it would have been infinitesimal; 2nd, that the cause and purpose of suffering would always have been self-evident; 3rd, that Nature herself would have operated remedially; and 4th, that though breach of law would have entailed suffering, the direct operation of law never could.

Eliminate from the chaos around us all the "naturally" produced evil, all the suffering that is caused by innumerable forms of wrong-doing, all the casualties and disasters arising from the hasty greed and cruel economies of commerce, and the general carelessness of the welfare of others—all, in short, that comes of a want of right principle in every direction, and you will have comparatively very little left. There will still be some evil. Though men should never go wrong from mere wickedness, no doubt they might often do so from error and ignorance; but if they were right principled, such errors would be slight, the effect would be quickly apparent, and, with universal good-will, it would be easily remedied. It is the pride and the obstinacy, the self-assertion and self-love, the greed and the malignity of human nature that give initial wrong-doing its frightful developments and interminable power for mischief. There would be moral and mental and social difficulties and perplexities in an ideal world, not perhaps essentially different from what we have

now, but it would be impossible for them to work out into such terrible developments. The very soil in which evil grows and thrives would be entirely wanting. Besides such mental and moral evils as come of mere want of knowledge and experience, the only other evils would be personal injuries; and here, I confess, there is immense difficulty—unless, as I have suggested, perfectly developed humanity might have been protected by some psychical endowment of which the perversion and distortion of Nature has deprived it. There are, of course, some very marvellous ways in which Nature gives us warning of danger. If she wishes to preserve you from blood-poisoning by foul air, she endows you with a keen sense of smell. We take this as a matter of course, yet there is hardly anything in the whole range of created things more astonishing than the capabilities of this sense. If Nature wishes to guard you from the danger of falling over a precipice, she gives you—at all events she has given me—an altogether inexplicable dread of the brink of a precipice, even though your judgment may assure you that you are perfectly safe. This curious apprehension of danger may be quite opposed to your reason, and perfect human beings might have been endowed with a dozen similar safeguards against danger.

Still, it may be difficult to conceive that any endowments could have rendered humanity absolutely secure under all the varying circumstances of life, and beneficent Nature seems to have contemplated the repair of physical injury to the body. I suppose that if any leading surgeon were asked what has been, upon the whole, the most important generalisation of surgical science during the present

century, he would unhesitatingly say that it was the recognition of the recuperative capability of Nature. There is in the human system a power making for health, and the chief aim of modern surgery is to co-operate with that power. Nature is always striving to repair mischief, and the healthier the organism the stronger is her faculty for doing so.

Now, who is prepared to say what might or might not have been the limits of that recuperative power, if during the whole history of the race life had been untainted and unweakened by disease, and had developed in the direct line of perfect existence? We find enormous differences of power of recovery from physical injury in different individuals. One man scratches his finger and he dies from it. Up in one of the galleries of the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, there are models or drawings—I forget which—of a man who had the shaft of a light spring-cart driven clean through his chest. The pole went in in front and came out behind; but the man recovered, and lived strong and healthy for years after. It is difficult, no doubt, to conceive that the loss of a limb might ever have been repaired, but there are facts of the animal world which suggest that even this need not be absolutely inconceivable. There are animals that do it. It is, for instance, well known that lobsters, if very much startled, will shed their legs or claws, and afterwards renew them. There is one species of crab that, if chased by an enemy, will throw off a limb, apparently for the purpose of diverting the attention of the pursuer, and will afterwards grow another limb. No doubt there is a great difference between the hairy porcelain crab and a man, but there is the recuperative principle in

Nature shown to be capable of renewing even a limb. What it might have been capable of in the highest developments of perfect life it is quite impossible to be confident about. Why the higher organism might not have been endowed with a power possessed by the lower I do not know.

Still, when all has been said, there would obviously, even in a perfect world, be a necessity for a capability of pain and suffering, and it is not easy to see how even premature death could always have been avoided. I may have a few words more to say about this farther on. This, however, is quite certain—if it were only the pain resulting from breach of law, it would be perfectly consistent with Divine Fatherhood and entire beneficence. And it is just *that* which so much of the suffering of the existing world most emphatically is not.

CHAPTER IX

HOW "MALADJUSTMENTS" ORIGINATED

NOW suppose that in the Divine mind a perfect scheme had been elaborated, and has been brought forth in all its splendour of possibility, its infinite complication, its delicacy of balance, its exquisite adjustment. It seems folly to look round upon a world so full of wonders as ours and to doubt for a moment that creative power might have done it. Suppose that it has been done, and let us imagine that, while the Creator has been getting the whole fearful and wonderful mechanism into motion, a powerful and malignant intelligence has been looking on, eager for an opportunity for mischief. Where is it probable that he would find his opportunity? We may suppose that the main movements of the vast mechanism, the broad lines of the scheme lie beyond his power. Between his own potency and that of the Great First Cause of all things there is an infinity of difference. Nevertheless, as I have been arguing, this malignant onlooker is probably a being endowed with stupendous creative and administrative power. Like the Great First Cause Himself he knows how to impose his will upon matter. He perfectly understands what is meant by

"natural law," and how natural laws are made and maintained, and how the working of them may be disturbed. As to the awful fiat that has called the whole universe out of the dark silent void, he can no more oppose that than I can individually prevent the creation of a great railway system. But he may do something to disturb the perfect working of that universe, just as I may here and there wreck a train by contriving to dislocate the connection between the signal overhead and the points that have been coupled with it. He cannot resist the terrible sweep of those general laws, but he can interfere with the checks and counterbalances, so to speak. He can effect some comparatively trivial disturbance of the faultless and beautiful adjustment of things. It may be that he is not directly the author of evil in your life or in mine. The bough that falls and crushes a child may have been directly brought down by the Creator's beneficent law of gravitation. But that malignant disturber may be the author of the evil for all that, and the great heart of the universe may be throbbing in pity and compassion.

Now I know that it will be said that this is mere conjecture, and so it is. But then it is mere conjecture also when—apart, of course, from "Revelation"—you tell us that these things are designed for our good; that God Himself permits this, that, and the other for "His own wise purposes"; that sin and suffering are intended for our training for another world, and so on. The question is, Which is the more probable conjecture? I maintain that evil never was any part of the Creator's scheme. It is a mere undesigned disturbance of the grand system of things, and if you look attentively round

upon the world you will find that that is exactly what it has the appearance of being. Assume that the Creator had an absolutely perfect scheme, vast and intricate beyond all human thought, beautifully harmonised, delicately poised and adjusted down to its most minute detail, and all for the health and happiness of countless generations of life, and assume that a malignant intelligence brings all the resources of his malignity and intellect to the task of disturbing that nicety of balance and adjustment, and in the world around us you have exactly what might be expected.

The real truth probably is that just as the Creator works by means of law and only by means of law, so his arch-enemy works by the disturbance of law. The great sweeping generalisations by which all created things are ruled are now beginning to be recognised ; but our thinkers have not yet attained to the idea that the flaws and failures of these generalisations may be due to the exercise of a precisely similar, though inferior, power, disturbing and counteracting.

The world upon the whole, it is a mere truism to say, is inexpressibly sublime in its harmony, its beauty, its manifest beneficence of design. We rarely realise how near to absolute perfection it is. Take just this passage from the eloquent Theodore Parker :—

"If the world be regarded as a collection of powers—the awful force of the storm, of the thunder, of the earthquake ; the huge magnificence of the ocean, in its slumber or its wrath ; the sublimity of the ever-during hills ; the rocks which resist all but the unseen hand of time—these might lead to the

thought that they were God. If men look at the order, fitness, beauty, love everywhere apparent in nature, the impression is confirmed. The all of things appears so beautiful to the comprehensive eye, that we almost think it is its own cause and creator. The animals find their support and their pleasure; the painted leopard and the snowy swan, each living by its own law; the bird of passage that pursues, from zone to zone, its unmarked path; the summer warbler which sings out its melodious existence in the woodbine; the flowers that come unasked, charming the youthful year; the golden fruit maturing in its wilderness of green; the dew and the rainbow; the frostflake and the mountain snow; the glories that wait upon the morning, or sing the sun to his ambrosial rest; the pomp of the sun at noon amid the clouds of a June day; the awful pomp of night, when all the stars with a serene step come out, and tread their round, and seem to watch in blest tranquillity about the slumbering world; the moon waning and waxing, walking in beauty through the night;—daily the water is rough with the winds; they come or abide at no man's bidding, and roll the yellow corn or make religious music at nightfall in the pines,—these things are all so fair, so wondrous, so wrapt in mystery, it is no marvel that men say this is divine."

Yes, the whole creation is "so fair, so wondrous, so wrapt in mystery," so near perfection. And yet it is not perfect: it falls just a little short of it. On all hands there are innumerable evidences of love and beneficence in the design of it all, and yet there are these "maladjustments." The evidences of beneficent design are not the exceptions: they

are the rule all but universally prevailing. The maladjustments are the exceptions, and by comparison almost infinitesimally trivial. It is as though we had a gorgeous palace replete with everything that the highest creative intellect and boundless resources can conspire to produce, but with here and there a broken step resulting in occasional accident; a fractured pane of glass slightly detracting from the beauty and comfort of one small portion of the house; or a slight crack in the roof resulting in damp and decay in one or two spots of the vast ceiling spaces. It is as though the most entrancing music swells and dies and soars again within the sumptuous halls of such a palace, but the harmony is now and again broken by some single discordant instrument. It is as though the timepieces regulating the multifarious life and activity within such a house are slightly at variance, and just here and there for a moment occasionally there is a clash and confusion in the general order of things.

The world upon the whole is inexpressibly sublime in its harmony, its beauty, its manifest beneficence of design. The possibility of faultless and complete correspondence is suggested to us by almost everything we see around. The world and human life too are far nearer to perfection than we are apt to imagine, and the maladjustments that are responsible for all the evil may be comparatively trivial, and may all be accounted for by such a disturbance of the balance of things as we have been supposing. Relatively speaking, it may be very slight indeed. Where the law of gravitation works mischief once, it operates beneficially ten thousand times, and it is quite conceivable that any disturb-

ance, any little undesigned irregularity of the vast mechanism of the universe, may be very narrowly localised. It may be entirely confined to this planet, though certainly here and there through space astronomers have occasionally discovered phenomena that have every appearance of disaster. So far as this world is concerned, in ten thousand ways we are shown in actual everyday experience something only the smallest possible remove from absolute perfection. Take a single set of conditions about which every Englishman appears to consider it almost a point of patriotism to do a certain amount of grumbling in the course of the year—our English climate. Did it ever occur to you to consider how nearly perfect is English weather for persons in robust health and comfortable circumstances? We get one dreary miserable day of cold and gloom, storm and tempest, depressing to those in low spirits, very trying to feeble vitality, unutterably wretched to the homeless and hungry, and it seems as though clouds and winds, cold and wet, storm and gloom were arranged without the smallest regard to man and his convenience and comfort, health and happiness.

But suppose that in all England there were no poor and hungry, no feeble and depressed, none sick or invalid—only the healthy, the happy, and the vigorous. Is it not likely that this dreary winter's day, instead of being regarded as an infliction to be endured as best we may, would come as only one —the least enjoyable perhaps—but one of a series of changes, forming all together a cycle of the year entirely delightful in its piquant variety and invigorating stimulus, altogether healthy and happy in its effect on life? Why, even as it is, for people in good

health and comfortable circumstances and happy spirits, there is hardly such a thing as bad weather. There are plenty of people who can and do thoroughly enjoy the worst of winter days.

But the fact is that neither human life nor the English climate is perfect. They are in the main marvellously adapted to each other, but not precisely so. There *is* some maladjustment. The weather, as we have recently been slowly discovering, is subject to great laws like everything else affecting human life, and these laws do not work with perfect correspondence. In consequence we get at one time a disastrous excess of rain, at another, equally disastrous drought. We get destructive hurricanes, death-dealing thunderstorms, and untimely frosts that in a single night will destroy the beauty and the bounty that all the forces of the springtide have for months been labouring to bring forth.

But are hurricanes and thunderstorms, deluge and drought and blighting frosts the main characteristics of English weather? No. Thoughtfully considered, these things have just the appearance of being the extremes to which a vast, complicated system of forces would be likely to run here and there upon the slightest disturbance of their balance and adjustment. To question the beneficence of these forces seems to be folly. In the overwhelming preponderance of cases they work beneficence and nothing else. But there is unmistakably this slight irregularity, bringing about, as I contend, undesigned results of evil and suffering.

And it is just the same with human and lower animal life. We do not realise how nearly perfect life is—how much of really healthy, happy existence

there is in the world. We see one child crippled and suffering, and we wonder at what we call the mysterious dispensations of Providence, and we are pained and saddened by the afflictions of the world. We forget that for every afflicted child there are ten thousand comparatively strong and sound and happy. We talk sometimes of the sufferings of animals. From some points of view it is a very sad subject. But go and look at the insect life in your garden on a summer day, at the fish in the nearest stream, at the birds and rabbits and squirrels in the nearest wood. Is it their suffering or their happiness that strikes you? Why, for every indication of pain or discomfort you may find a million suggestions of vigorous health and enjoyment. Nature red in tooth and claw! It is false. Nature on the whole is nothing of the kind. Nature is all aglow with pleasure—dashed with pain just here and there. The rule everywhere is the prevalence of happiness. Evil is the comparatively trivial exception. It cannot reasonably be disputed that, taking the world over and all its phases of life, the laws of Nature are overwhelmingly productive of good, and that evil—though frightful enough in the aggregate regarded absolutely—is after all only what might be produced by a very slight disturbance of the perfect adjustment of things.

CHAPTER X

A TYPE OF A PERFECT LIFE

WHY, I have asked in a previous chapter, must the grand scheme of things move on upward through a protracted series of evolutions, characterised here and there by all that is tragic and fearful, instead of unfolding like a rose under June sunbeams, every stage in the sublime drama entirely adapted to the happiness and well-being of every sentient creature?

Now let us for a moment take that rose as a type of the whole living world. Let us begin with a perfect seed placed in a perfect environment. The soil is precisely adapted to its requirements. As it slowly develops root and stem and leaf and flower, all things in earth and air and sky are entirely favourable to its health and growth. Enemies do not attack it, disease never touches it, winds and rains and sunbeams are mingled in precisely the proportions that are best adapted to its full and perfect life in every successive stage. Somebody, of course, will put in here a very obvious objection. This will be all very well in a world where there is nothing but rose-trees. But the weather that may

be exactly suited to a rose-tree may not be equally favourable for a gooseberry bush. It is of no consequence for my present purpose, but I may point out in passing that that objection leaves out of consideration the great power of adaptation to circumstances characteristic of all healthy, vigorous life, both in plants and animals. From this consideration it may be seen that, between what is necessary for perfect life and what may be endured without detracting from perfect life, there is a margin affording scope for an immense variety of healthy vitality. But set the objection aside, leave all other things out of consideration for the moment, and imagine that the whole natural order of things has been arranged with sole reference to that one rose-tree. Sunbeams sometimes smite fiercely upon it, but the moment their intensity or duration has reached a point at which the health and beauty of the plant would suffer, the interplay of natural laws at once interposes a check, just as the governor balls of a steam-engine shut off a little steam the instant the speed begins to exceed a certain velocity. The mere increase of speed brings into play a centrifugal force which makes the balls fly farther apart. And this flying farther apart raises a lever and shuts off a little steam. In just the same way we will suppose the whole cosmical mechanism is interconnected. The life-forces that are developing that rose-tree are linked with the mechanical forces that are regulating sunbeams, and by an inevitable, unalterable necessity the very intensity of sunbeams which would, if prolonged, affect the rose-tree prejudicially, and bring about debility and disease, malformation and premature death, tends to gather overhead the

grateful shadow of clouds and to bring down invigorating rain. I am, of course, only describing what Nature actually does, but does somewhat imperfectly. I am merely supposing there were no imperfections. The downpour of rain after the heat, so healthful and favourable to growth and beauty up to a certain point, might be prolonged beyond that point, and chill and injury might result. But no; the great terrestrial machine is so exquisitely adjusted that that cannot happen. The very copiousness of the rain engenders winds that begin to sweep away the clouds and bring out the sunbeams and the blue sky long before mischief can happen. Thus soil and atmosphere, moisture and heat, and light and darkness all conspire with absolute harmony to develop this rose-tree. From the deepest rootlet to the topmost twig everything is perfect, and you do not know which to admire most—the exquisite immaturity of the bud, the superb form and colour of the half-opened rose, or the fragrant beauty of it in its full-blown perfection. From the first pulse of life in the seed to the time when its full tide of vitality ebbs softly and sweetly away under the mellowing sunbeams of autumn and the quiet rest of winter creeps gently on, there is nothing approaching a "maladjustment," nothing whatever corresponding to evil. Life has been pure, bright, immaculate, perfect.

Now that rose I take to be a fitting type of the whole order of created life as it would have come from the hands of a Creator omnipotent in power, omniscient in wisdom, and infinite in goodness. Why has it not come so? Why is the whole system of things so marred by these maladjustments?

All scientific probability seems to suggest that animal life upon this globe first glimmered in the dim recesses of the ocean. But wherever it may have begun, whether in one form or a million, it might have been perfect life in perfect environment, every natural law and every surrounding condition contributing to such happiness as its particular stage might be capable of, and to its entire well-being. And just as that rose unfolded, every stage in its development characterised by its own peculiar perfection, so might the whole world of life have unfolded, from animalculae to men. All the conditions of existence might have been subject to immense variations, but the variations would have been confined within limits required by the health and happiness of the creatures concerned, or, what would have come to the same thing, the creatures themselves would have been endowed with powers of instant adaptation to any variations.

No maladjustments. Try to realise what it means. From the first dawn of animal life the environment of every living thing would be exactly what was required for its utmost health and happiness. There would be no distinction between what was for its good and what was for its pleasure. The strongest inclination, whatever it might be, would always be inseparably linked with what was for its highest good. There would be the most accurate adjustment between every single condition of its life, and the most perfect happiness of which its particular stage of development rendered it capable. The tiniest moneron in the ocean, the smallest speck of protoplasm that ever thrilled with the first trembling of sentient life, would find tem-

perature and food and the movements of the tide—if tide there were—exactly suited to its highest enjoyment of the faint glimmer of life with which it was endowed. Existence might be very elementary, very undeveloped, in a sense, very low and poor; nevertheless, so far as it *was* developed, it would be entirely perfect in itself, quite perfect in its relation to everything around it. Uneasiness, suffering, discontent, unsatisfied longing amounting to pain and unhappiness could not exist. These things come of maladjustment, and there is no maladjustment. "Perfect correspondence," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "would be perfect life." And from the tiniest speck of protoplasm up through all the successive stages of evolution—the long series of invertebrate creatures, of fishes, of reptiles, of birds, of mammals—from the tiniest speck of protoplasm right up to the finest specimen of manhood the sun ever shone upon, there would be the same perfect adjustment, the same faultless adaptation to environment—all of it, creatures and surroundings, good and nothing but good, all producing happiness and nothing but happiness. All that men have ever dreamed or ever can dream of a heaven is implied in the single phrase, "a perfect creature in a perfect environment." Such a condition would be heaven either for a moneron or a man. Such a condition it seems to me in the highest degree probable that a Beneficent Creator would design from the very first, and would desire to ensure through all the infinite unfoldings of creation.

But here the reader may not improbably or unreasonably interpose with a difficulty, one phase of which in another connection we have already con-

sidered. How, it will be asked, can you assume the impossibility of evil and yet at the same time assume the highest perfection of what is good? How can you assume, for instance, the highest possible type of manhood without supposing he is a free agent, and, if a free agent, free to do wrong? You cannot conceive of any possible adjustment of laws, any possible system of things which must of necessity produce nothing but what is good, without excluding conditions which alone render the highest good possible. It is like assuming the possibility of a perfect light while denying the possibility of a shadow.

It is an old difficulty, but I do not think it need trouble us much. It is just one of those perplexities through which plain people may see their way to a sound conclusion, while cleverer and more metaphysical minds may go wandering in a wilderness of difficulty.

I suppose we are all agreed that human nature is the highest outcome of the creation of which we have any knowledge, and we are all agreed that an essential characteristic of the highest manhood is free-will. If you take away a man's power to do wrong, no doubt you injure his manhood by depriving him of the firmness and fortitude that come of trial and test, and of the conscious merit of doing right. There is a sense in which every man is and must be free to do any and every evil within his power if he is to be a man. And yet you and I know perfectly well that there is also a sense in which it is quite correct to say the higher the man, the nobler and stronger the character, the more impossible it becomes for him to do evil. It is, no

doubt, possible, in a sense, for you to murder your neighbour's child; and yet, while your brain is untouched by disease—while you remain a man, that is to say—is it possible? The Archbishop of Canterbury is a high-minded gentleman, and he has £15,000 a year. Is it possible for him to take advantage of an opportunity to pick eighteenpence from a poor man's pocket? Why, yes, of course it is, in a sense, quite possible. If the Archbishop literally could never have picked a pocket or robbed an offertory, I suppose he never could have acquired the high-minded conscious integrity which renders this possibility quite impossible. The truth is that while men are literally and absolutely free to do this, that, and the other thing, their doing depends upon their thinking, and there are laws of thought as inexorable and irresistible as the law of gravitation. Assuming that these laws are perfect in their operation, and that they are working through a perfect human organism, though the man may be quite free to go wrong, it must be as impossible for him to do so as it is for water to run uphill or for a rock to hang suspended in the air. He may be, he must be, a free man, but he can no more escape from the immutable laws of thought which are imposed upon him for the express purpose of inclining him to do right than he can escape from the law of heredity. The very fact that a man ever wilfully goes wrong is proof of a want of adjustment. The law of mind is not perfectly adapted to the man or the man to the law. A perfectly healthy mind in a perfectly healthy body, placed in a perfectly organised world and ruled by laws absolutely adapted to the whole system of things, could not possibly

think erroneously upon any subject involving questions of good or evil, could not possibly desire to do wrong, and yet that mind shall be free—literally free. It is a perfect organism in a perfect environment. That means health and happiness and goodness, strength and beauty—perfect life.

CHAPTER XI

BUT IS NOT "MALADJUSTMENT" ESSENTIAL TO EVOLUTION?

BUT, it will be objected, such a world of perfect adjustment is quite inconceivable, and even if it were not, it would be a world not worth living in. There could be nothing like physical, mental, or moral thew and sinew. An earth in which sunbeams were never too hot and winter never too cold, in which every creature had just what was requisite, and something corresponding to governor balls always came into play in the nick of time to prevent even so much as discomfort, would be no world at all for the training of men. It might be all very well for rose gardens, but for men—never. Instead of striving upwards to higher existence and nobler life, the race would inevitably go down in degeneration and decay.

Moreover, the biologist will, of course, come in with the one all-important objection to which already some allusion has been made. It is the maladjustments, I shall be sure to be reminded again, that have really been the means of evolving the world of life. There are your specks of protoplasm, your monera, your very earliest forms of life, sticking to the rock or drifting in the water. Your suggestion, says the

reader, is that they have come from the hands of the Creator quite perfect in themselves, perfect in all their powers and possibilities, perfect in all the conditions and surroundings of their existence, and that, you contend, would have been the case in each successive stage of life development, from monera to men.

"But," says the biologist, "if they are perfect in themselves, and if everything around them is adjusted to their needs with the nicest possible accuracy, how is the process of development coming about? There is the dawn of sentient existence, how are you going from that small beginning to develop all the unimaginable gradations of life till you get your perfect man and woman?" As a matter of fact, philosophers tell us, development has come about not by happiness, not by the perfect gratification of all natural craving, not by entirely suitable environment. On the contrary, all progress has been the result of strife and struggle and a general environment which constantly tends to kill off all but the "fittest." "Without the vigorous weeding of the imperfect," say our scientific writers, "the progress of the world would not have been possible." Advance everywhere is by struggle with adverse surroundings, and it is just because only the very strongest and best are able to survive the incessant wrestling with unfavourable conditions and legions of enemies that life has moved upwards. If all living creatures were perfect of their kind and there were no adverse surroundings whatever, every living thing would continue to live until it had run its natural course, whatever it might be. There would be no development, no progress, for there would be no demand for exertion. There would be no "survival of the fittest," for all would be perfect and all would

survive—if something of a "bull" may be pardoned. There would be no struggle for existence, no weaklings to go to the wall, no strongest to survive and perpetuate the race constantly moving upwards. The one force by which the unfolding of life is urged on would be entirely lacking. Pain, internecine strife, and antagonism are, we are told, the very conditions of development.

Well, it is false. As I have already contended, development is not necessarily by pain and internecine strife and antagonism. I am not, of course, presuming to contradict any positive conclusion of science, though even that presumption would be modesty itself compared with that of the man who can look round on such a world as this and declare dogmatically what would or would not be possible to creative power. When science affirms that ruthless strife always *has been* a prime factor in the evolution of life, and points to indisputable facts—as Darwin has done—science is on firm ground. But if science goes beyond this and presumes to affirm that it could not have been otherwise, she is going not merely beyond the warrant of her evidence, but right in the teeth of evidence. That life has been evolved to a large extent under the conditions alleged is no doubt true. That it could not have been evolved under any others is certainly false, and the proof that it is false is that all around us development is actually proceeding under other conditions. If science is content to declare—and so far as I am aware no leading authority has ventured to do more—that the world *as we find it* could have been evolved only by internecine strife, *that* of course may be conceded as highly probable. But then our complaint is that the

world *is* as we find it—so full of "maladjustment"—when it might have been so different. It is the very fact that the world *has* been evolved by such a process as science describes that seems to me to justify the confident belief that the Creator is not to be held entirely responsible for it, and that His benign intentions must have been subject to some sort of malignant interference. When therefore Mr. Darwin tells us that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate that mutual slaughter is an absolutely indispensable part of the evolutionary process of creation, I do not dispute the fact, but I contend that the fact itself is evidence of some sort of disturbance. As a working principle, murderous selfishness is so horrible, and many of the developments of it are so hideous and detestable, that it could not have been the deliberate adoption of a Benignant Creator. If, therefore, I am told that as a matter of fact that has been the way of creation, I am bound to admit that apparently it has been; but if I am told that progress could not have been otherwise secured, I say it is false. All the higher developments of life are the outcome of an exactly opposite principle, and all the stupendous struggle of creation going on under our eyes is a struggle to get off that wrong line of development on to the right one. About that wrong line and the right one something further must be said presently.

To say that every creature as it came from the hands of the Creator would be perfect and that its environment would be perfectly adapted to all its needs, is not to say that, as the great unfolding goes on, living creatures would be subjected to nothing in the way of stress and strain, difficulty and test of

endurance. It does not mean that food would be had without the exercise—and sometimes perhaps the most strenuous exercise—of all the powers with which at any stage of development living things might be endowed. It does not mean that temperature would never fluctuate beyond what luxurious comfort might require. It does not mean that life would have no problems and no tasks. On the contrary, the perfect environment of a perfect creature would be an environment affording the fullest possible scope for every healthy faculty of life, and powerfully stimulating to the exercise of such faculty. Perfect environment does not mean that as evolution goes on and life assumes its higher forms, as intelligence expands, as ideals are conceived, and wants are multiplied, that all the needs of that life will be supplied and all its ideals attained without exertion. Certainly not. A perfect world peopled by beings of complete health of body and mind would probably be a world of far more uniform and intense activity than this, but the activity would be different and the outcome of it would be nothing but good. As we know the world, a frightful proportion of its work is a mere grinding of the wind, and where we are not grinding the wind too many of us are grinding the devil's corn. It is true that the world, as it is, is exceedingly well adapted to maintain an incessant struggle and to impel to tremendous activity. But much of the struggle is not worth making: a large part of the activity is feverish and morbid, and much of the outcome of it is devilish rather than divine. A perfect world would have been quite as full of activity, quite as stimulating to every faculty of brain and body, but the stimulus would have been entirely

wholesome, the activity would have been the joyous activity of health, and the outcome would have been good, only good.

Progress is not necessarily by pain and strife and antagonism. It is by effort if you will. It is by the putting forth of energy; but some of the world's greatest philosophers—Plato, for instance—have declared that perfect energy is perfect pleasure, and the very general experience of life tends to prove it. Effort is not painful. On the contrary, healthy effort is all but synonymous with happiness, and under the highest stimulus the pleasure of effort may become ecstatic rapture. Kant defines pleasure as neither more nor less than the consciousness of the furtherance of life. That evolution has to some extent been brought about by suffering and cruel antagonism is no doubt true; that it could not have been otherwise is probably quite false. It is just a perception of this progress by suffering, this evolution by evil, that has constituted the great perplexity of our time Here, men say, is Nature "red in tooth and claw," trampling down and devouring millions of the weakly and "unfit," and seemingly careful of nothing but the preservation of the best and the strongest. And here is the God of Nature, represented to us by all the chief religions of the world and by all religious teachers as a God of love, of goodness, of pity, and compassion. For millions of years, scientists tell us, Nature has been evolving by a selfish and ruthless struggle, and here are our religious teachers and preachers, while reluctantly admitting that that verily appears to be the truth, trying to raise the world to enthusiastic faith in the God of Nature as a Being who hates cruelty and oppression, a Being who would rule the world by love.

Men may talk as they please about the reconciliation of science and religion. There is no reconciliation possible till we can arrive at some reasonable theory for accounting for the strange fact that a God who is said to be love itself—just, true, good, merciful, fatherly — can yet work for immeasurable ages by every phase of cruelty and wrong. Science teaches—and to a large extent truly enough—that strife, discord, selfishness, cruelty, the merciless slaughter of the weak by the strong, these are the ways of creation. Religion teaches that all progress should be not by strife but by concord, not by cruelty but by kindness, not by self-assertion but by self-surrender, not by hatred but by love. How is it possible to reconcile these?

This is the perplexing question that the scientific teaching of our day has forced upon us in a way that it has never been forced before, and it is, I believe, a question which neither science nor religion nor both of them combined can satisfactorily and convincingly answer, because they have both abandoned all real belief in the existence of a second power in the universe.

Science and religion both believe in a Supreme First Cause, and science scarcely less than religion, nowadays, is teaching that that great First Cause is a power making for righteousness, for higher life. But what they are both to a great extent ignoring is the fact that there is also another power in conflict with the Supreme First Cause—a power making for unrighteousness, for lower life—and that it is in this conflict that the solution of the great riddle of life and destiny must be sought.

CHAPTER XII

"EAT AND BE EATEN"

ANY notion that a world of perfect adjustment would be a world of stagnating idleness and insipidity, a dead, uninteresting level of uniformity, a world without aims and objects, without ideals to stimulate or purposes to attain, is a notion that could originate only in a totally inadequate conception of what is implied in a world of perfect adjustment.

But the biologist's difficulty has the appearance of being a real and a serious one. There is no denying that, if we take a wide sweeping view of life in all its forms upon the globe, although peace and health and happiness are the general and predominant characteristics, yet there is so much of strife and warfare and mutual destruction, and these seem to be so inherent in the very nature of things, so entirely part and parcel of the warp and the woof of creation, that it is no wonder that this generation —the first in the whole world's history to catch anything approaching a glimpse of the whole realm of life and what is going on in it—it is no wonder that this generation should stand in mute perplexity and dismay, unable any longer to fall down and worship

a God who seems to have chosen such methods of creation, and yet—and yet—aghast at the thought of being left, fatherless and friendless, the mere sport of such forces as are swirling around. That good is in the overwhelming predominance, and that there is "some soul of goodness" even in things evil is too plain to be doubted; but that evil is really in the very fibre of things, bound up with them, inseparable from them, necessary to them, seems equally indisputable.

Is it possible to find any clue to the mystery presented in the fact that while we have so many reasons for believing the God of evolution to be a being supremely good, the very heart and centre of everything that is loving and fatherly, evolution itself seems so largely and so indispensably associated with evil?

I think it is. But before attempting to find the clue, let us endeavour to realise the difficulty in its fullest extent. There are no doubt some points of view from which, apart from the process of evolution, internecine strife, ruthless slaughter, the law of "eat and be eaten" seems to be indispensable to the whole system of animal life. A naturalist will give you any number of facts showing that if some of the lower forms of life were not kept in check by their natural enemies or by starvation, the world simply could not go on. For instance, there is the well-known statement of Leeuwenhök that the roe of a single cod will contain eight or nine millions of eggs. Let such powers of production go on in geometric progression, unchecked by foes or by famine, and a very few generations would choke up the ocean itself. Again, Réaumur says that the female of the

common flesh fly will deposit 20,000 eggs. From these eggs the perfect fly will be developed in sixteen or twenty days, so that a month may be taken to be sufficient for a generation of flies. If half the 20,000 eggs produce females, there will be 10,000 flies, each capable of producing 20,000 eggs. If you reckon this out you will find that at this rate the sixth generation—without considering the previous ones—will give 2,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 flies. Suppose that thirty-two of them occupy a cubic inch of space, there would be enough flies to cover all England and Wales to a depth of 3800 miles, or the whole surface of the world, land and water, to the depth of a mile and a quarter.

The only safeguards the world has against such a peril as is here presented in the mere fecundity of some forms of life are that when creatures thus multiply beyond a certain limited extent, they must starve to death or be devoured by natural enemies. Starvation and wholesale slaughter by fellow-creatures seem therefore part of the providential order of the world.

Now this appears enormously to enhance the difficulty the evolutionist urges, and it complicates the perplexity of creation by neutralising much in it that looks to be pure beneficence. We look round upon Nature and we find it teeming with happy life. Even the fecundity of that flesh fly seems to be a clear indication of the beneficence of the Creator. The 20,000 eggs that one fly will deposit in a putrefying carcass become so many maggots to rapidly clear away matter which may pollute the air and prove inimical to healthy life. We have here, in fact, apparently another illustration of the

way in which the injurious working of Nature's laws may be guarded against by special provision. The putrefaction of that carcass is the result of the operation of natural laws universally prevalent, and it is a result that may be extremely injurious to the highest forms of life. It may bring about the deadliest disease. Not only does there seem to be beneficence in the evident purpose of preventing such injury, but the mode of doing it plainly shows the same characteristic. The very putrefaction breeds teeming life specially adapted to its conditions, and though it is of course a very low and poor form of life, there is no reason to doubt that it is healthy and happy. The 20,000 larvae are endowed with an appetite that makes that of a hungry schoolboy ridiculous. Almost as soon as the eggs are deposited the maggots are hatched from them. It has been shown that they will increase in weight two hundred times in twenty-four hours, and one eminent naturalist declares that they and their progeny will pick the bones of a dead horse sooner than a lion could. The very scavengering of the earth is done by calling forth vigorous, voracious, and no doubt happy life. All this might have been done without life, and even the living creatures might have been called forth and impelled to their work not by pleasurable appetite, but by painful necessity.

That the work of clearance is done as it is all over the face of the earth seems an evident indication of good-will to man and a delight in the multiplication of living creatures wherever life is possible, and the latest bacteriological science has been astounding us by revelations of existence under circumstances which had hitherto been supposed to render

it quite impossible. For instance, it has quite recently been discovered that the purification of water from organic pollution, which had formerly been supposed to be entirely a mechanical and chemical process, is really the work of living bacteria, and it is found that the secret of efficient filtration is the preservation of these animalculae in health and vigour by an abundant supply of fresh air. But the most astonishing fact in connection with the matter is that these animalculae can devour the organic pollution only when they have been preceded by other bacteria whose peculiarity it is that they can live and thrive and carry on their work of vegetable decomposition without any atmospheric air at all. The foulest mass of vegetable corruption cannot smother or destroy them. In the heart of it all they will work steadily on, breaking down the organic matter and reducing it to a condition in which the fresh-air bacteria can appropriate it and convert it into nitrates. Thus even death and decay breed living things by the myriad. It seems as though the Creator delights in life and is boundlessly prodigal in the bestowal of it.

But here this frightful counterbalancing fact comes in. The Great First Cause does indeed seem to rejoice in every possible means of promoting and maintaining life. But He seems also equally ready to inflict death. Nature's laws do, it is true, produce 20,000 maggots to revel in a brief orgie and then to take to themselves wings of gauze and a vesture of green and burnished gold and to soar into space and sunshine and the rapture of love-making. But Nature's laws that produce the happy life also prepare the cruel death to cut it short. If

the vast majority of those flies are not destroyed before they have consummated what seems to be the purpose of their life, they will be a peril to every living thing. And the same with the codfish. Leeuwenhök says that of eight or nine millions of eggs spawned by the cod not more than two, upon an average, can ever arrive at the same stage of development as the parent fish. All the rest at some stage or other are devoured, and this is typical of what is going on all the world over and all the ages through. It may no doubt be questioned whether in these particular cases there is much suffering involved; but that the preying of animals one upon another often does involve suffering can, I suppose, hardly be doubted. What can we make of it? Is it possible to regard it as beneficence? Or is it an awful combination of cold, calm intellect and pitiless power using life or death, love or hatred, happiness and peace or murderous strife and discord, just as either may best serve the preordained scheme? Or is it again the mysterious result of disturbed adjustment?

Here then is a grave difficulty. Not only are pain and destructive strife requisite for eliminating the weak and developing the strong, but they seem to be indispensable conditions of life itself upon the globe. As things are, all danger to the general welfare from such amazing productiveness is met by making one creature prey upon another. If you are going to make the world so perfect in its amiability that no thrush will ever devour a worm and no hawk will ever pounce upon a thrush, you will "disturb the balance of Nature" and you will soon find that it is a world in which no living thing

can exist—not even the prolific creatures themselves.

Parenthetically, I may say that this is an argument that, in another form and in a different degree, is just as applicable to human life as to that of the lower animals, and may be used, and indeed is used, against the benevolence of the Christian religion. Beat all your spears into pruning-hooks, stop all your wars, bring your philanthropic agencies to protect the weak and the afflicted, and all your knowledge and skill to exterminate epidemics, make everybody prosperous and comfortable, and your population difficulty will soon become appalling. The Malthusian theory of population was based on the idea that the providential way of keeping down numbers within manageable limits was to have all round the outskirts of society a fringe of starvation —a sort of safety zone for the world, in which the people could not exist for want of food ; and many scientific men of the highest standing have recognised in war and pestilence merely Nature's way of guarding against the overpopulation of the world. It is, in fact, a difficulty by no means confined to any particular stratum of life. It is one that confronts you all the way up from the lowest to the highest, and if it is to be conceded that "eat and be eaten" is the law of Nature for the lower animal world, you find it difficult to escape this horrible suspicion— that there is no valid reason why it may not be the law of human social life too. Once concede that God may have designed this cruel strife as a part of His mechanism, and who shall set any limit to it? Looking round upon Nature, the truth seems to be that individual life or death is of no more

value than the particles of dust beneath one's feet. It is not merely that death is inflicted wholesale as a means of obviating alarming dangers, it attends upon the commonest actions of our daily lives. You walk across a field, and every footfall is destruction to some living thing. Perhaps you are fond of gardening. The gardener's skill is very largely a skill in slaughtering. To grow your roses, "insecticides" are usually indispensable. To get a crop of apples you may have to doom living things to annihilation by tens of thousands. You set light to a heap of garden refuse, and you know that you are consigning untold numbers of slugs and worms and insects to extinction if not to torment. You cannot thrust a spade into the soil without killing or mutilating.

It is not surprising that men, looking round upon this strange prodigality of life, this inherent necessity for selfishness in its most ferocious forms, and upon this total indifference to the infliction of death, should be lost in perplexity and, in the startling light of modern science, should be compelled to avow themselves agnostics—unable to see how it can possibly be beneficence in the heart of creation, and yet unwilling to be forced to believe that it is all mere brute force and totally unsympathetic law. They are loth to lose hold on the idea of fatherhood; but if the Creator did deliberately design to work out the evolution of the world by evil, they cannot but see that it becomes the easier to believe that war and pestilence and ruthless competition may really be His instruments, deliberately chosen.

CHAPTER XIII

"RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW" NOT NECESSARILY EVIL

In trying to see our way through what is certainly a very complicated and difficult part of a difficult subject, it is important to remember that this competitive strife, this mutual destruction, is not confined to the animal kingdom. "Eat and be eaten" is a rule quite as prevalent in the vegetable world as among animals. Plants compete with each other for advantages of soil and situation quite as generally as animals, and are as mutually destructive. Yet I daresay we shall all agree that it would be folly to regard this internecine struggle as any part of the world's evil. There are, no doubt, very remarkable analogies between the two kingdoms. Some plants are sensitive to touch, many of them appear to sleep, some are carnivorous, others have locomotive powers, all are more or less liable to disease, and to a few it is difficult to deny something very like consciousness. But, so far as I am aware, nobody has ever seriously pretended to have found any reason to suppose that any single member of the vegetable kingdom is susceptible to pain, or that anything at all corresponding to the suffering of

animal life results from the mutual destruction of plants. Whether the vegetable world would be better or worse, more beautiful or less, without the competitive struggle that manifestly goes on in it may be dubious, but in the light of our present knowledge it seems reasonable to believe that while that struggle serves to evolve higher and better forms, greater usefulness and beauty for the benefit of the higher life of the animal world, it is wholly unattended by any kind of evil. The fact that one plant in its struggle after food and sunshine kills another in its vicinity, and presently feeds on its decay, may enhance the beauty and fruitfulness of the victor, and may be quite unattended by anything at all corresponding to evil. Even if we adopt Wordsworth's idea—

> And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes—

the death of the second plant must at the utmost amount to a mere negation of good. It is merely that there is one plant the less to enjoy the air.

Now I think there is reasonable ground for believing that, as regards at any rate the lower forms of animal life, what looks to be the evil of deadly strife, of murderous competition for existence, is in reality little more than the corresponding thing among plants.

Evolutionists seem pretty well agreed that animal and vegetable life had a common origin. They must have started from the same point, were indeed identical for a certain period through the upward course of development; but somewhere back in the inscrutable darkness there came a parting of the

ways, one way leading up little by little through all the infinite manifestations of animal life, and the other through all the phases of the vegetable. At the outset of the parted ways, the plant seems to have got the start of the animal, for the lowest form of animal life, we are told, is distinctly simpler in its character than the earliest plant. In neither of them, of course, is there the faintest trace of a nervous system. The plant and the animal were probably alike totally incapable of pain, and long after they had been differentiated, and for a great way up towards the higher developments, it is possible that by the deliberate design of the Creator the moving force in the evolution of life in both kingdoms really was just what the biologist declares it to be everywhere throughout Nature—the force of mere selfishness and nothing else. Indeed, if you follow in imagination the gradual unfolding of life, you will find it difficult to conceive of any other motive force for a long distance up, and you will find it equally difficult to conceive of it as an evil. Internecine strife for existence in the lower strata of animals, while it is the means of development and progress, is probably quite without the least trace of cruelty. It is as entirely free from any kind of evil as the corresponding strife in the vegetable world, and may be quite as consistent with the perfect benevolence of the Creator. Nobody would think of doubting the goodness of God because a forest of fir trees kills all the vegetation beneath its shade, or because He made an ivy to suck the life out of an elm. Struggle for existence, mutual slaughter, the red in tooth and claw over a vast area of the animal kingdom may be, in all probability it is, exactly the same thing.

If so, that disposes of all difficulty up to a certain stage in the evolution of life. There is no evil. There are none of the conditions of evil.

But in the process of the suns and the unfolding of life there must come a point at which this ceases to be so—when nerves and consciousness, intelligence and affections begin to play their part. It is above this point that all our difficulties lie. Down in those lower planes where, biologists tell us, a thing may be a plant at one stage of its existence and an animal at another — where some animals are inseparably attached to the rocks, while some plants may be moving about in quest of food, so difficult is it to demark the two kingdoms—there may be just the kind of competitive strife that we see in the fields and forests around us, and yet there may be nothing that we cannot reconcile with the perfect beneficence of the Great Deviser and Creator of it all. But the moment that evolution has attained that point at which the struggle begins to involve pain and unhappiness, it becomes quite another matter. The moment that that rudimentary but happy and congenial life begins to be overshadowed by fear, or debased by conscious cruelty, the moment that process of evolution begins to evolve not only cruel selfishness in its most odious forms, but deceit and artifice and treacherous cunning in the warfare which one animal wages on another, then I think you may be certain of one of two things—either the Creator is not all-benevolent, or that that scheme is somehow working out as He never intended it should: there must have been some disturbing and hostile influence. If He designed all this cruelty, this selfishness, this deceit and artifice and treachery

as the means of attaining His ends, He cannot be the being our noblest thoughts depict Him. He chose to work out His ends by evil, whereas, if He is omnipotent, He might have done it all by goodness. If He did not design it, there has clearly been some maladjustment in the working out of the laws of life.

It would be extremely easy to adduce any amount of evidence tending to show that, even above the point at which suffering comes in, the physical evils of the animal world are enormously less than they are often represented. Death itself has been tricked out by priestcraft and superstition in terrors purely fictitious, and our own ignorance and want of observation have led us to assume that our personal experience of physical suffering is a gauge by which we may measure that of the animal world at large. It really is nothing of the kind. It is not a gauge by which we may measure the sensations even of other men with any exactitude, to say nothing of the various lower animals. Physical pain, like pleasure, even among human beings, is very unequally distributed — how unequally we should, if the truth were known, perhaps be astonished to discover. The man who has had a tooth drawn naturally fancies he knows exactly what is experienced by another under the same operation. Perhaps he may, but it is very probable he may not. He may be entirely mistaken, and that not merely because in the one case the tooth may be a good deal more deeply planted than in the other, but because the whole apparatus by which pain is occasioned in one person may be very different from the corresponding apparatus in another. When we read of Mutius and Archbishop

Cranmer both holding their right hands in the flames till they are burnt off, we naturally assume that they displayed an equal degree of fortitude, and suffered the same torture from the consumption of the member. They may have done so, but the chances are that there was no sort of comparison to be drawn between the two cases. The truth probably is that individuals vary at least as greatly in their capacity for physical suffering as they vary in their capacity for mental and moral suffering. We all of us know people whom we are accustomed to speak of as thick-skinned. They appear to be as invulnerable as though, heels and all, they had been dipped in some river Styx. Gibes and sneers and contumelies, criticisms and reproaches that drive ordinary people beside themselves, fall upon the pachydermatous individual apparently without the smallest effect. On the other hand, there are the thin-skinned folk, whose feelings are not only sensitive but positively sore. They feel things it was never intended they should feel. They are continually wincing and writhing under that which to others would be a matter of indifference. Between these two extremes, people vary in their mental sensitiveness quite as greatly probably as they do in their physical appearance, and there can be little doubt that at least to the same extent they vary also in their capacity for physical suffering. The queerest illustrations of this are sometimes met with. For instance, some time ago a prisoner in one of the London gaols, who certainly might have found half-a-dozen other ways of committing suicide, deliberately held his neck over the gas-flame in his cell until he had literally burned a hole in it, and shortly after died. The

prison warder who pointed out the cell to me in which this had taken place, told me that in a neighbouring cell a man somehow got hold of a piece of wire, and probably finding the solitude of his cell wearisome, he devised a little diversion with it. He bent it into the form of a "W," the initial of his own name, and amused himself by making it hot in the gas-flame and burning his own body. In the morning he was found with capital "W's" blistered all over his skin from head to foot. It is, of course, quite impossible to believe that that hide of his could have been possessed of ordinary sensibility. If that worthy had chanced to have been born an ancient Spartan, and could have been inspired with an adequate motive, he would have had comparatively little difficulty in allowing a fox under his cloak to gnaw into his vitals. He would have made an excellent Hindoo devotee, and would have swung round suspended by a hook in his back with very impressive nonchalance; or he would have gone to the stake as a martyr of the Middle Ages with a composure and placidity that would greatly have edified the beholders. I do not, of course, mean to suggest that the fortitude of fanatics or of martyrs is to be explained by assuming their insensibility to pain; but heroism must undoubtedly be easier, and martyrdom a good deal less grim and terrible, if physical sensibility is at a low stage of development. Even with martyrs this may sometimes have been the case, though it is only fair to say that the possibility would seem to be that many of them must have been rather exceptionally endowed for suffering. People of all sorts have figured amongst them; but it is certainly a fact that some of them have been persons of high culture

and intellectual development, while, as a rule, the best authorities appear to be agreed that it is just the reverse of these qualities which are found in association with obtusity to pain. Mr. Galton, in one of his works, says that when he was at Earlswood Asylum he saw an idiot who had undergone an operation, which, though slight, was one which to ordinary persons is productive of the keenest torture. The patient underwent it, however, with the greatest composure, and indeed watched the proceedings with evident interest, and almost without any manifestation of pain. Another inmate of the institution, he says, had a large scar on his wrist. It appeared that he had been slightly burned by accident, and had evidently found the sensation rather piquant and agreeable than otherwise. He had taken an early opportunity of repeating the sensation, and, idiot-like, had rather overdone it, and had burned himself severely. When we hear of North American Indians having undergone the process of scalping without feeling it, we are right, no doubt, in explaining it partly by the anæsthetic power of tremendous excitement; but it may also be that a scalping to a Red Indian is not what scalping would be to a doctor of divinity or a member of Parliament or a popular novelist.

There can be no doubt that, even within the limits of the human genus, susceptibility to pain is to a large extent a matter of individual endowment, and varies immensely; while as to the genera below the human, we really know very little about their capabilities of suffering. Rats will eat their own tails just as some people bite their finger-nails, and so will some monkeys. A rabbit caught by the leg in a

steel trap will tear the leg out by the joint or will gnaw it off. Some years ago an old hyæna at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris had its leg broken, and one night it was found to have bitten off the injured joint and eaten it. A fish will break from a rod with the hook in its jaws, and will go feeding about as though quite unaffected. It is difficult to say what are really reliable criteria in the matter of the suffering of animals. If you take up a little pig ever so gently, he will squeal as though he were being subjected to indescribable tortures. We certainly cannot judge by the cries that animals make when they seem to be hurt. A hare will scream piteously from fear if she is in danger and cannot run, but she will utter no sound under what seems to be the cruellest suffering, and it is the same with frogs. The convulsive struggles that animals make cannot be regarded as any criterion of the pain they are suffering, nor does the mere existence of nerves appear to be altogether reliable. The sting of a wasp is to human beings one of the keenest sensations. But a badger, which is an animal tolerably well endowed with nerves, will dig out a nest of wasps and eat as many of them as he can catch, quite indifferent to their stings. Frogs and toads will also swallow wasps whenever they can get the chance.

But though the subject is a most interesting one, I do not care to discuss at any length the question whether the physical suffering of the world is more or less than is generally supposed. For the purpose of my argument it is of no importance. It is quite sufficient that there is any suffering at all. My contention, let me repeat, is briefly this: If we are

to assume the unqualified goodness of God, it is reasonable to believe that that goodness would have designed nothing but good for all His creatures, and that all His laws would have worked to that end; that up to a certain point in the evolution of life, the law of mere selfishness might have been dominant quite consistently with perfect creative goodness. But it is also reasonable to believe that when the unfolding of life had reached the point at which evil would result from the unmodified working of that law of mere selfishness, some other law modifying and controlling it would have come into play and would have prevented the evil. This is what you might reasonably expect to happen if the Creator is a being of pure benevolence, desiring the unqualified good of every living thing.

Now I hold that there is evidence just as solid and scientific as there is for the undulatory theory of light or the principle of evolution in Nature, that at that very point at which it first became possible for selfishness to be in any sense an evil, a new force actually did come into play to prevent it, and that force the strongest and the most widely diffused of any throughout the whole realm of animate Nature.

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREATEST OF ALL MALADJUSTMENTS

In looking out over all animate nature, it must be pretty evident that we shall be quite sure to go wrong in speculating upon what we see, if we confine our attention to physical conditions alone. Quite as much as upon any merely physical condition, to say the least of it, goodness, health, happiness, and perfect development, as well as the general progress of the world from the lowest to the highest forms of life, must depend on the most accurate counterbalancing of two grand controlling laws or principles operating not on physical nature, but directly on life itself. I mean the principles of selfishness and love.

Perfect life in a perfect environment would require the play of both these forces, and the balance between them, or rather the adjustment that would ensure the invariable supremacy of love, would probably be the most important in the whole realm of physical and spiritual nature throughout the universe.

In all stages of life a certain degree of selfishness would obviously be indispensable. Every individual living thing would be best qualified to take care of itself. No other individual could know so well its own wants and wishes; none would be so able to

provide for them, and the selfishness impelling it to do so would be indispensably requisite. But this natural and necessary instinct would have to be entirely and universally dominated and controlled by the law of love, so that the lower instinct of selfishness could never assert itself to produce injury or unhappiness.

That this may have been the intention of the Creator from the outset there are indications to be found on all hands, and that, so far as human beings are concerned, it is what the world seems to be struggling up to, and ought to be struggling up to, I suppose all religious humanity will be ready to testify. That love in the broadest and most comprehensive sense of the word is the strongest of all the passions and impelling motives of men and the lower animals alike is a mere truism. It is not merely love-lorn maidens and brain-sick youths who have testified to this. Poets and philosophers, preachers and statesmen, men of every age and of every condition of life have declared it, and the universal experience of mankind has recognised the supremacy of love as a motive power in the world.

> Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
> And men below, and saints above.

Selfishness is no doubt a tremendous force, but bring to bear upon it the light and heat of love, and the very strength and intensity of selfishness become so much fuel to the fire of the master passion.

Now we have just seen that up to a certain point in the evolution of life mere selfishness alone may have been operative and would have been entirely sufficient. Whether the germ of the higher force

was inherent in primordial matter or was a subsequent breathing in of the Divine, may be a moot point for those who care to discuss it, indeed it is a point which in one form or another has already been the subject of a good deal of discussion. The truth of the matter, however, seems to become pretty apparent when we consider that it is possible to perceive very distinct traces of the principles both of love and selfishness in the vegetable world. They are less developed, but the indications of both are practically as unmistakable in the one kingdom as in the other, and the fact points, I think, indisputably to the existence of both principles from the very first. But this at least would seem to be beyond controversy, that while animal life was so rudimentary that, to use a familiar expression, it had neither sense nor feeling, love, the dominant force, could not be operative and was not needed. No suffering could come from the unrestricted play of the lower impulse. But the very moment that suffering became possible, love became possible also. The very conditions of sensitiveness and consciousness and intelligence which for the first time in the unfolding of life gave selfishness its power for evil, for the first time in the unfolding of life made love possible and brought it into play as a counterbalancing and controlling force. There you have a perfect illustration of what I have been contending for all along—that the laws of Nature must have been established for the good of every living creature, and that, in the creative works of a Being of perfect beneficence, the moment any law began to operate for evil, some other law would have come into action to check and modify it.

It is true that it is not possible to say from

actual observation that just at that point love did actually begin to assert itself, but the thing is as certain as though it were possible. It seems a self-evident fact from what we know of rudimentary life, that so long as it was destitute of nervous organism and conscious individuality, any kind of suffering would be impossible, and that the moment that nerve and conscious life began to develop and pain thus became possible, by those very endowments love began to be possible too. We cannot actually trace its working in the lowest forms of nerve-endowed life, but that very early in the unfolding of that life both love and selfishness are found to be operating is of course unquestionable, and that animals very low in the scale of intelligence are quite capable of subordinating their own selfish desires and impulses to the higher instinct of love, one need not go far for proofs. Let me give one very homely instance of what I mean. My children have at the bottom of my garden a little bantam cock who is evidently attached very strongly to a certain little hen. This handsome little biped has, I believe, quite as healthy an appetite as most birds of his age and condition, and at regular feeding times, when a copious supply of food is scattered before them, he is as active and vigorous as the rest. But it is very evident that Tom's selfishness is very largely dominated by his love for his comely little companion. He will rout and scratch about for small worms and slugs and other little delicacies with all the vigour of a bird famishing for food, and when he has found what he is looking for he will set up a "cluck cluck cluck" and will make pretence of eating voraciously, though without making a single actual peck. It is all in-

tended merely as an invitation to come and have something he has found for her, and when the little hen condescends to be persuaded, Tom will stand by proud and happy while she enjoys what he has been labouring for. They are both of them very fond of earwigs, and scores of times I have turned out to them the contents of the small flowerpots I have set as traps on the tops of my dahlia stakes, but I have never known him touch one of the earwigs. He is as fond of them as the other bird, but the supply is limited and he will invariably stand by while she gobbles them all up.

Now all observers of nature know very well that that sort of thing—the play of selfishness against love, and the predominance of love—is to be found very extensively throughout the animal world. Nor can it be set down as a mere matter of sex. That animals will subordinate their own appetites and interests to the requirements of their young of course everybody knows, but it is by no means confined even to such relationships. The subordination of the wishes and welfare of one individual to those of another, and even the subjection of individual will to what is demanded by the common good, as in the case of bees and ants and beavers and many others of the lower animals, may be found on all hands. The subjection of self as a ruling principle is indeed met with so extensively as to render it quite conceivable that the instinct might from the outset of conscious life have held sway over the entire animal kingdom. You may deem it very droll to suggest that the self-sacrificing affection which is the very essence of the highest religious conception that the world has yet attained to is a

living principle to be met with in the lives of birds and beasts and fishes, but whether it is droll or not, there the thing is. There is no disputing, I suppose, that in the animal world—and I am afraid it must be added, in the human world too—selfishness, if not the most potent force, is the more generally prevalent, and if in the whole round of lower animal life we had no trace of self-effacing love as a ruling principle, we might reasonably have doubted whether it could ever have been a power in that realm. But the thing is there beyond all question. Why might it not have been universally, instead of only partially prevalent? I suppose no student of natural history would have any difficulty in producing any amount of evidence that, even quite apart from sexual or parental love, animals often display very considerable capacity for an affection one for another quite capable of overcoming selfish instincts. Moreover, even where this is not the case, these two actuating principles are often, at least, so evenly balanced as to enable animals to live together in communities on terms of perfect peace and amity. "Eat and be eaten" may be a great law of Nature; but these are certainly not the terms on which, to say the least of it, a very large proportion of sentient creatures stand with regard to each other. Whether animals of prey constitute the larger part of animal life I do not know, and, by the way, I do not know any one who can tell me, though I have taken some trouble to get a little enlightenment on the point, and have been in communication with one or two leading authorities on the subject. But, even if the predatory life is the rule, the exceptions to it are simply incalculable.

Here then you have these facts:—First, through-

out a very large proportion of animal life upon the globe, self-assertion and its opposite are so nicely balanced, one against the other, that life is peaceful, harmonious, and upon the whole, happy. In the second place, you have throughout a very large part of the world of life an actual and a strong predominance of love over selfishness, in the case of animals with their young. Thirdly, you have innumerable facts showing that, apart from parental affection and sexual passion, individual animals are often capable of conceiving attachments which quite override their innate selfishness. And fourthly, you have it as a fact, assented to by all the wisest and noblest of every age, that as a ruling principle love is the highest, the strongest, and the best.

Now, looking at those four points, there seems to me to be nothing at all improbable or extravagant in the supposition that that ruling principle must originally have been intended to hold sway supreme and undisputed from the very dawn of conscious life, right up through all its developments for all time. It is just what you would expect of a Creator of perfect beneficence, and to disturb that all-important adjustment, and by some inscrutable modification of law to bring selfishness into predominance in the place of love, is just what you might expect of a being looking out upon the work of creation, with the intellect and the power of a god and the malignity of a devil. To conceive that a beneficent Creator deliberately intended to produce myriads of sentient creatures to be actuated by unmitigated selfishness, to develop every form of cruelty, and to go on for untold ages "tearing each other in their slime," is to my mind impossible. It is just what you would *not*

expect. To imagine that the pathway of creation, as originally marked out, was to be a ghastly course of rapine and bloodshed and cruelty, and that the very progress of the work of creation was to depend on the ruthless slaughter of the weak and defenceless by the strong and the capable, is of course totally irreconcilable with the idea of Fatherhood. It is entirely inconsistent with the supposition that the Designer could be a Being of justice and mercy and loving-kindness, and thousands who cannot put their feelings into arguments are conscious that at the back of all the religious teaching of our time there looms, dark and perplexing, this "God of Nature," who has somehow to be identified with the God whom the preachers represent to be all goodness and tenderness—the very embodiment of love.

No; depend upon it, that was not the original plan of creation. Selfishness was never ordained to be the ruling principle in the realm of sentient and conscious life, even temporarily. As the predominant, evermastering principle, love is so obviously the better, so manifestly more in accordance with what we might expect from the Creator of a world so full of beauty, so teeming with happy life as this, that I cannot doubt that it would have prevailed everywhere. Among the lower animals, as in human life, the extensive *predominance* of selfishness has, in any broad comprehensive view of the whole realm of life, all the appearance of a disturbance of the generally prevailing order, the perfect balance and adjustment of things, and it is only when you get something like readjustment, and love again asserts its supremacy, that you get any approximation to perfect life.

CHAPTER XV

EVOLUTION WITHOUT MALADJUSTMENT

In the preceding chapter I have endeavoured to show good reason for believing that while by the design of the Creator a certain degree of selfishness would necessarily be inherent in living creatures, the primal law made benevolence the stronger power. Throughout a great section of life—and that the best section—that power does prevail, and I have argued that in all probability it was intended to be supreme throughout the whole realm of animal life. I have contended that the fact that it is not universally predominant must be due to a disturbance. I have maintained that the establishment of such an order of things—necessary selfishness subordinate, and benevolence supreme—would be entirely consistent with the character of the Creator as we see it displayed in innumerable ways in His works around us, and I have argued that to subvert that order of things—to put the principle of selfishness supreme and benevolence subordinate—is exactly what might be expected of a malignant intelligence bent on thwarting and opposing the Creator's beneficent design. To explain how this can have been accomplished—how this actuating principle of selfish-

ness can have been stimulated into supremacy—is as impossible as it is to explain how these rival incentives can have been implanted at all. We only know that there they are, sometimes one getting the upper hand and sometimes the other, and since that is undeniably the case there is nothing extravagant or unreasonable in supposing that, but for some disturbance, the better of the two might invariably have been supreme. Such a disturbance would have been as astute as it was malignant. It would have been an interference with adjustment at the very heart of things, and if you can assume it as a fact, you have in that one maladjustment a complete explanation, not indeed of all the evil of the world, but of all the moral and social evil of the world, and if you can further assume corresponding interference with the physical laws of creation, you have a hypothesis which covers the whole field.

These two laws have not been entirely transposed. As I have pointed out, and as in fact everybody knows, selfishness is not universally supreme even in very low forms of life. The benignant supremacy of good-will makes everything that is brightest and best in the world, and all sentient creatures are happy just in proportion as they are on terms of affectionate concord with each other. But that there has been some subversion, and that all the moral evils of life, and by far the greater part of its physical suffering have resulted from this one radical wrong, may reasonably be believed. It has changed the whole course of evolution and the whole character of the life evolved.

Let us endeavour to realise some of the effects of this fundamental disturbance, and consider how

different the course of things might have been if, at that momentous point in the process of evolution at which the slow dawn of nervous, conscious intelligence made suffering possible, the genial glow of an all-pervading love had simultaneously begun to shine forth universally supreme.

The first consideration that strikes one in endeavouring to realise the process of development under such conditions is, that though on the lower, insensitive planes of existence there might have been destructive strife—as I have said, quite without evil, because bodies would be painless and "feelings" non-existent—that strife would have died out just in proportion as nerve and consciousness and love developed. Birds and beasts of prey and venomous reptiles never would have been evolved. Evolutionists are agreed that it is just the fierce struggle of created things that has produced these birds and beasts of prey, and there can be little doubt that it is the malignity of the struggle that has produced the venom of so many reptiles. A startling suggestion of this may be found in the fact that again and again it has been observed that the bite of an animal which ordinarily would be quite harmless may prove deadly if given when the animal is in a state of furious excitement and rage. As most persons are aware, the saliva of animals is a solvent fluid assisting in the digestion of food, and usually acting in a very mild and gradual manner. But toxicologists say—to quote the expression of one of them—that it is "of the signification of poison," and one of its functions is said to be to destroy any molecular life in food eaten. It has been stated on what seems to be good scientific

authority that excessive and prolonged agitation involves abnormal waste of tissue, and somehow develops the poisonous character of the saliva. There are many well-authenticated cases of death resulting from the injection of the ordinarily harmless fluid. An instance is related of a cat which was chased over some housetops by boys until it broke through a skylight over the Adelphi Theatre, and fell upon the stage. An actor attempted to remove the terrified creature and was bitten, and in a few days died with all the symptoms of hydrophobia. The Duke of Kent met his death in a similar manner from the bite of an exhausted and infuriated fox, received, if I remember aright, during his governorship of Canada. A case is on record in which an Irishman was bitten by his antagonist in a fight, and shortly after died of what was pronounced to be hydrophobia; and I have a distinct recollection of a death in London resulting, according to medical testimony at the time, from the bite of a child under great excitement. This bite had been followed by all the indications of the most virulent poisoning, and there are several such cases on record. A few years ago it was reported that the late M. Pasteur had "cultivated" the poison of human saliva to such a point that he was able to produce with it many of the effects of the most virulent snake poisons, and, as I have said, analogous results have again and again been known to be produced by violent anger and excitement.

You have only to suppose that, generation after generation, certain species of animals have been specially vindictive, implacable, and ferocious in temper, and you have, according to well-authenti-

cated facts, the means of accounting for the venomous character of their bite. And if that venom may be accounted for in this way, you have but to imagine that from the very dawn of life there were no such vindictiveness and ferocity of temper, and it becomes obvious that the rattlesnake and the puff-adder never could have been evolved.

No doubt the objection will again be raised that the free strife and hostility of the animal world are essential to development, just as every day it is contended that unlimited competition among men is necessary to progress. Both ideas betray a total want of imagination on the part of those who hold them. Of course, if you must have tigers and puff-adders as the outcome of evolution, then, no doubt, there must be the necessary strife to evolve them. A world in which self-assertion always gave place to benignant good-will obviously could never have evolved such things. But then why need they have been evolved? My contention is that the Creator never could have designed that they should be. There is much in all species of animal life that it would have been much better never to have produced. Tigers and hyænas, vultures and sharks, ferrets and polecats, wasps and spiders, puff-adders and skunks no doubt have their interest for the zoologist, but we could very well dispense with them all; and, for my part, I do not see that it was at all worth while to adopt special measures for the evolution of our Neros, or Napoleon Buonapartes, or even our millionaires. Life would have been different, no doubt, but does anybody pretend to believe that it could not possibly have been better? The natural course of evolution has, it is true,

developed a wondrous variety, an infinite amount of what is curious and interesting, even where it is evil. But might it not have been equally varied and curious and interesting in other ways without the evil? If the bee can live entirely on honey and seemingly be one of the happiest and cleverest of creatures, is there in the nature of things any reason why the spider might not have lived and been happy without murder and treacherous cunning? He might never have become the adept he is in web-spinning, and perhaps never would have developed the marvellous apparatus with which he is endowed for the purpose; but there are plenty of insects that display cleverness quite as great as his in making themselves beautiful and curious dwelling-places. If the spider had turned his talent that way he might have found just as great scope for it, and if he had only developed a taste for leaves or fruits, like many other animals as good as he he need never have become the cruel and ferocious little cannibal he is. The character of the spider is something horrible. An elaborate attempt was once made to breed some of their tribe for the sake of their webs, which it was believed might be turned to commercial account. It is said that it had to be abandoned because it was found impossible to keep them together. They simply devoured each other so long as there was one left to attack another. Is this really a desirable outcome of long ages of evolution? Was this ever designed, do you think? Or is it a phenomenon similar to that of our "criminal classes" — a phenomenon of perverted nature, bad environment, and "maladjustment" in our social organism?

It is an absurdity to suppose that in a perfect world creatures of strength and beauty, infinite in variety and wondrous in faculty, would not have been forthcoming. Under the conditions I am supposing it would not have been the same world. Much of its lower life would have been different, but not less wonderful, not less varied and admirable. The indications of industrial faculty in animals are often amazing. And mere industrial faculty is not the only thing one finds. I was recently looking at the curious little structure of the bower bird they are fortunate enough to possess in the museum of the Botanic Gardens, Regent's Park. The queer little creature not only builds a nest, but quite apart from its nest sets up a little fairy bower made of thin twigs and bits of dried grass. It bends them overhead so as to form a little alley open at both ends. It will weave in with its twigs any smart feathers it can find, and it will strew the ground at the entrance with pretty coloured shells or bits of glittering glass or stone or anything else that looks gay and bright. And when it has made the prettiest little retreat it can find skill and material for, it calls together friends and neighbours, and they will amuse themselves by the hour, both sexes running round it and through it in sheer exuberance of delight and playfulness. Of more stimulating sports and pastimes, animal life of course presents innumerable illustrations, and everybody knows something of its multitudinous industries The nests of birds, the webs and underwater retreats of some species of spiders, the hive-building, carpentering, the cloth-making, and the masonwork of different species of bees, the dams of beavers, and the hills of the ant, are all more or less familiar to us. Who shall say to what extent

the development of that kind of thing has been checked and prevented by the predatory ferocity engendered by a perpetual state of warfare? No doubt that warfare has itself produced very remarkable characteristics. It has evolved some very marvellous faculties in one way or another. But how many faculties has it stunted and destroyed? In the human world, if a man takes to predatory habits he may indeed sharpen his wits and cultivate his powers of cunning and deception, but he is spoiled for every honest and useful purpose, and where you have two or three generations of men of this type the characteristics of the thief become all but ineradicable. In such a case, do you say that these characteristics are what the Creator intended for the man? Of course you do not. You regard it as a corruption and perversion of nature. Why may we not regard the characteristics of the tiger and the boa constrictor, the ferret and the crocodile in a precisely similar light? To my mind they are almost manifestly due to the fact that at the momentous point at which, in the evolution of life, the invariable domination of benevolence should have been assured, there was a disturbance, at least a partial subversion, of the two antagonistic forces, and I hold that there is no rational way of accounting for this but by the supposition of a second power hostile to the Creator.

In the case of mankind the effect of that partial subversion of perfect and harmonious law has been even more momentous and far-reaching. It is commonly said by anthropologists that men were first hunters, then they were shepherds, and next tillers of the ground. Through all three stages the waging of war upon each other has certainly been a

main factor in the formation of character and in the direction of industry.

Now under a régime of perfect benevolence the entire hunting and shepherding periods in the development of mankind would have been altogether eliminated, and warfare and all its demands on human intellect and activity would have been absolutely unknown. The human race would have made direct for peaceful industry, for art and science and social organisation. They would perhaps have begun by knocking flints together and shaping them into sharp-edged implements just as our actual forefathers did ; but their implements would not have been spear-heads and battle-axes, but something corresponding to ploughshares and pruning-hooks and the tools requisite for cutting wood and building houses.

From the moment intelligence began to dawn it would have displayed itself, not in the cunning and cruelty of the savage, not in the devising of pitfalls and snares and traps and in the making of murderous weapons, but in just the higher and further development of those peaceful arts and industries of which we see so many hints and rudimentary illustrations in the lower animal world. Food supply would, of course, have been the earliest of human interests. But the hunting and snaring and trapping of birds and beasts and fishes for food, the ruthless extinction of happy life that made the woods ring and the waters flash and the hills and plains resound with gladness, never could have suggested itself. Life in all its infinite variety, its beautiful harmony, its entrancing shapes and colours, its wondrous faculties, its mysterious metamorphoses, would have afforded to the higher human race one of its main sources of

interest and happiness. To break in upon the faultless harmony of it all with death and destruction, to hunt down and cruelly kill an animal for sport or food, to feed and tend a flock of sheep and then to cut their throats and devour them—all such things would have been horrors inconceivable. If men had been dominated from the first—as all progress and the highest religion suggest that they may be in the end—by the radiant benignity of an all-pervading benevolence, and if in a lower degree the same happy influence had pervaded all sentient life below them, an act of slaughter upon a dumb creature and a deed of death one upon another would have been equally impossible. If I am told that in that case the world would soon have been overrun with superabounding life, my reply is that perfectly harmonious and rightly balanced laws could and would have prevented any such result. The very fact that plague and pestilence, war and mutual devouring are necessary to preserve some sort of a balance shows that it is not a balance that can have been provided for by omnipotent and perfect goodness. It is an unnatural balance that may very well have been brought about in a manner such as I have indicated in a previous chapter. It is, I hold, the outcome of a disturbance of the original design. If this control of the world's fecundity by untimely death and mutual destruction can in any sense be regarded as the working out of law, it certainly is not purely beneficent law. It is not such law as a purely beneficent being would have ordained. To assume that the world under a régime of beneficence must inevitably be overwhelmed by its superabundance of life, is to assume that the beneficence is both short-sighted and incompetent.

The probability is that, in many cases at least, the destruction has brought about the superabundance and the superabundance the destruction—that the two things have acted and reacted, and that the perplexing phenomena of dangerous fecundity and habits of prey have been the direct result.

To explain what I mean, let us in imagination get back for a moment to the beginning of codfish life in the seas. Let us imagine that, like everything else, the codfish is perfect and its environment perfect. Its productive powers are nothing exceptional. They are within such limits that they do not prejudice or imperil other forms of life. There is no necessity, therefore, for any foes to keep the multiplication of the cod in check, and with only such exertion as is best conducive to health and happiness every codfish in the seas is certain to find a sufficiency of food. It is not designed that the creature shall afford food for any other animal, for in the whole realm of creation there is no such thing as one creature preying upon another. The whole animal kingdom—at any rate at that level and upwards—feeds exclusively on the vegetable kingdom, just as we see that a good half of it does now. That is the law, and it is just the law you would expect of a beneficent Creator. From end to end of the seas there is not the slightest impulse or inclination to break that law. Through all life there is just enough of the salt of selfishness to impel every creature to take care of itself, but higher than this and stronger than this is that universally diffused benevolence which, in taking care of itself, carefully avoids doing injury to another. Life is healthy, vigorous, joyous, abundant; it fills to the utmost capacity every faculty of the creature. It is only, it

is true, a low and poor form of life, comparatively, but it is perfect of its kind, and there is not the slightest taint of malignity in it. Aggressiveness, pugnacity, hostility, war, carnivorous propensity? Why, all this ocean life is the handiwork of Fatherly goodness. The great benevolent Spirit of the universe breathes through it all, and there is no trace of such things. Laws—spiritual, physical, biological, social—throughout the entire animal world are all adjusted with that exquisite balance of which we may see so much around us, and it is all "very good."

Hitherto selfishness has been second; love has been first, and has been dominant everywhere and over everything. But now a horrid thing takes place. Something quite abnormal happens. These laws have somehow got disturbed in their balance. Instances begin to occur in the animal world in which selfishness has got the upper hand. Individuals begin to ignore the rights of others, and to indulge their own inclinations, regardless of the general happiness. This has led to strife that has culminated in one creature attacking and devouring another.

By way of digression for a moment, I may point out, and it is of the greatest importance to bear in mind, that nowhere in the realm of Nature could such a thing take place but by the failure of law. It is not merely a question of an individual or a number of individuals rebelling against a law. In such a case the law itself has failed. The natural laws here concerned, as I have endeavoured to make clear in a previous chapter, are not like human laws. Human laws do not enforce themselves, natural laws do. They not only prescribe what shall or shall not be,

but they actually carry out what is prescribed—indeed, it is the carrying out that *is* the law. If, therefore, the Creator has made it a law of the animal kingdom that love shall be the predominant force, and selfishness shall be only quite a subordinate one, and presently we find selfishness in control and love overcome, it is not a mere manifestation of selfishness on the part of individual creatures: it is a failure of law, whatever the cause may be. It is not merely a disturbance of life, it is a disturbance among the forces of life.

To the terror and confusion of all creatures, destruction begins, and for the first time in the history of life there is evolved a general sense of uneasiness and apprehension and fear. Slowly, perhaps, and generation after generation, there comes to be established a state of warfare and hostility. Every creature comes to regard every other as a possible enemy. The generally diffused friendliness and benevolence towards all living things around dies out, and becomes restricted to the narrow circle of progeny, and *there* perhaps becomes somewhat abnormally developed. By the constant destruction of the young and defenceless, the parental instinct, the strongest and the steadiest of all natural instincts, is baffled and thwarted, and there is a sense of loss and unhappiness. This is the real disturbance of the balance of nature; and to repair the mischief, the productive powers are stimulated to what is really an unnatural activity. You find something very closely resembling this in the vegetable world whenever any interference with reproduction takes place. Any gardener will tell you that you may considerably prolong the flowering of plants by con-

tinually removing seed-pods as fast as they are formed. At this moment I have in my garden clumps of doronicums that are blooming a good month beyond their natural season in consequence of the removal of their flowers as soon as they have faded. Reproduction is the primary purpose of the life of the plant, and if that purpose is thwarted the attempt to fulfil it is renewed again and again. One main secret of successful rhododendron growing is the removal of all dead blossoms. The shrubs immediately begin to develop for next season a greater profusion of buds than they would otherwise have done. The analogy between plant and animal in this respect is, of course, not altogether complete. In the plant it is merely that the strength which would have been exhausted in the perfecting of seed is rendered available for the formation of next year's bloom, while in the animal it is the parental instinct which stimulates to the repair of the mischief. In both cases, however, there is the vital force persisting in the natural direction, and it is easily conceivable that that persistence, if protracted through long periods of time, may abnormally develop reproductive powers. This, if I am not mistaken, is quite in accordance with biological science. It is the perpetual effort, generation after generation, through long ages, to repair the mischief inflicted by enemies that is, I believe, supposed to account for the fecundity of the codfish and other creatures. The more prolific it becomes, the more enemies it can feed; and the more they multiply, the more prolific it grows. A strange, disturbing, carnivorous appetite, growing by what it feeds on, swarms the seas with destroyers. Thus we have a

new and unnatural balance set up, and our philosophers tell us that Nature, as it comes from the hands of God, is "red in tooth and claw," and that to "eat and be eaten" is essential to the very existence of the world. When the deep religious sense of noblest humanity cries out against such teaching as a libel on the character of the Creator, science blandly points to "facts," and tells us that it is of no use wringing our hands over lost ideals. We must take the world as we find it.

And if we are compelled to abandon all belief in a second power in the universe, science is right. Our great ideal *is* lost. Evolution has destroyed it. Nature *is*, to a frightful extent, red in tooth and claw, full of cruelty and injustice, pain and unhappiness; and the Designer of it, who, if He is omnipotent and supreme, might have obviated it all, has chosen not to do so. It has pleased Him to work this way, and we, His puny puppets, may hope and trust and pray, but we must suffer and struggle and die to work out His awful scheme of things. His plans are immutable, and His laws there is no resisting. If we choose to fall in with them, in the main they will work for our good; but if they happen to bring us the cruellest anguish, the bitterest injustice, we may indeed look to kindly hearts around us for pity and help, but to Heaven there is no appeal.

It cannot be. The very fact that those great sweeping laws, in the main, work for health and happiness, for love and goodness, gives the lie to it all. There *is* some other power. The beneficent working of those laws *has* been disturbed, and the Creator is striving, and successfully striving, to restore the balance and adjustment of things, and all

the altruism that saves this dark world from sinking in total despair is but the response to His perpetual appeal to all that is noble in men for co-operation. This solution of the world's great riddle does indeed detract in some comparatively infinitesimal degree from the power of the Creator, but it leaves His goodness still shining in absolutely unsullied splendour.

But let us get back to evolution without maladjustment. Food would be the first of human interests, and the search of it, and the selection of it from among the vegetable products of creation alone, would have been the primary occupation of mankind under a régime of perfect and universal benevolence. At the earliest stages of humanity, the fruits and vegetables of the earth would have been taken as they were found, and human life, a very rudimentary thing, would have been chiefly occupied in searching for the best kinds, in little arts of personal embellishment, in the construction of dwelling-places, and in innocent sports and pastimes. Life under such circumstances would possibly have been very slow of development. But why should it not have been slow? To use a familiar expression, what would have been the hurry? Human life in its earlier stages would, of course, have been of a very poor and rudimentary kind; but of its kind, and for its grade of development, it would have been perfect—perfect in itself, and perfectly in harmony with its environment; and it would all have been suffused by the genial glow of a beneficence linking every living thing to every other living thing, and keeping the whole in close touch and in absolute harmony with the Creator. It is possible, as I have just said, that development would have been slow, but under the

universal motive power I am supposing, it is by no means to be certainly assumed that development would not have been infinitely more rapid than as a matter of fact it has been, and that ages ago the world might not have risen to heights of civilisation and social organism that are as yet only the Utopias of our seers and our poets. But, rapid or slow in development, it would in its stage have been perfect life in perfect environment; and though no doubt primitive man, by breaking away from the all-pervading law of beneficence, and engaging in hunting and trapping and snaring the lower creatures around, and by drawing together in families and tribes for mutual slaughter, might have quickened the development of certain faculties of mind and body, the harmony and symmetry of life would at once have been destroyed, and its line of evolution totally changed. Let primeval man unfold his powers under the supremacy of beneficence, and it would be an all-round, well-balanced, symmetrical development. Let him adhere to the vegetable world for his sustenance, and though at first he might take his food as he found it, and might be content merely to select the best to be met with, as his faculties unfolded, the phenomena of the vegetable creation would naturally receive more and more observant attention. His mental powers would find scope in this direction. Considerations of growth, of soil, of situation, would afford absorbing interest; and the experimental stages of cultivation and propagation would be a perfectly natural sequence. Every discovery of a new principle or an improved method would have been hailed with happy enthusiasm, and would have redounded to the universal good of the race and the honour of the

Creator, whose laws would be thus ever becoming more wonderful as they became better understood, and more and more beneficent to His creatures as they learned to understand them and to put themselves in line with them. The mere infancy of the human race would have had a knowledge of the principles of cultivation which strife and turmoil and total perversion of faculties have hardly permitted us to attain to in untold centuries of time. The mere necessities of life would thus have led by a direct path towards the fairylands of science through the placid fields of peaceful industry and the harmonious growth of social organisation. This pathway of development would have been entirely in harmony with all we know and with all we try to believe of the Creator, and though it would never have produced a puff-adder, a hyæna, a Napoleon Buonaparte, or a fraudulent company promoter, it would have led by a far shorter cut to our Isaac Newtons, our Michael Angelos, our Brunels and Beethovens, our great captains of industry, our high-minded statesmen, and our daring explorers. The other path—the hunting, the shepherding (and butchering), the war-making—would be in direct antagonism with all our highest conceptions of the Creator, and all we would fain believe of Him. It cuts right across the natural line of evolution—hindering, arresting, destroying, perverting, and corrupting.

Just as thievish and lawless habits will utterly demoralise those who give way to them, and just as war will wreck industry, disorganise commerce, totally arrest the prosecution of art and science and literature, and plunge whole populations into ignorance and degradation, so these things by their

development from the first have prevented the growth of industry and organisation, science and civilisation. From the very outset they have given a totally wrong and unnatural direction to the whole course of evolution.

> Farewell remorse ! all good to me is lost :
> Evil be thou my good !

Is it possible to imagine work more congenial to such a spirit than thus to make the very laws of a Benign Creator work out death and destruction ? In the whole eternity of time, in the whole infinity of space, can you conceive of a point at which the astutest Satanic malignity could act more effectively than just at that point where, in the slow unfolding of life, love and selfishness first came into conflict ? Assume that just there a malignant power effected a disturbance of the natural laws under which things were unfolding, and you have a theory which accounts intelligibly for every phase and form of the world's moral and social evil, while you leave the character of the Creator purely benevolent. There is no other theory that will do it.

The idea that death and disease, wrong and suffering are essential to Divine purposes ; that life cannot be unfolded except under a frightful pressure of mental, moral, and physical evil ; that afflicted bodies and distorted minds and souls tormented in a very hell of anguish and misery are things absolutely necessary to the grand upward procession of life, is neither more nor less than a diabolical delusion. It has been born of these very things, and it has been infinitely pernicious in obscuring and darkening the wholly benignant character of the Creator.

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

In this concluding chapter I want, if I can, to help the reader to realise what might have been the course of things if the First Great Cause had not only designed a perfect world and actually created it without flaw or fault of any kind, but had sent it forth on its long course of expansion and development quite without any of that interference and disturbance we have been considering.

For this purpose of realising a world untouched with evil, it is of no consequence what particular theory of creation you hold. Believe if you will that the world and all that is in it have developed from a single germ, just as an oak has developed from an acorn. Or, if you think it more probable, regard it all as the outcome of innumerable germs presenting many varieties of species, just as a forest may have sprung from a simultaneous planting of acorns and beech-nuts, fir-cones and holly-berries. Assume that the whole is the outcome of a single act of creation, or think of it all as the result of several successive acts separated by long ages, or following one another on the six days of the same week. Think what you will of it, only for the moment assume that in the

sublime work there have been no flaws, no faults, no "maladjustments" of any kind. The laws of light and heat and electricity, of chemical affinity and so on, and those more mysterious laws of life and thought and feeling of which we are all more or less conscious at times—let them all play one against another with a precision, a balance, a perfection so absolute that, though there may be infinite variety and innumerable degrees in what is good, nothing that is evil, nothing that does not tend to health and happiness and higher life, can possibly be brought forth.

Here is a child physically, mentally, morally perfect, constitution entirely free from the slightest taint or flaw, embryo faculties of body, brain, and soul perfectly symmetrical and well-balanced, and certain to develop without the least twist or distortion. One sees occasionally some lovely specimen of childhood that it would seem safe to pronounce quite perfect—physically at least. But it is very possible that the highest conception we can frame of even physically immaculate childhood is very far from what the reality would be if the whole course of the evolution of humanity had never been disturbed by evil. It may be that there can be no perfect child without a perfect ancestry of indefinite extension backwards. And remember that a perfect ancestry does not mean merely a single line of ancestors. It means a network of ancestors every one of whom must have been capable of bequeathing every faculty of heart and brain and body quite unimpaired, quite faultless. This child we are condesiring had two parents. Those parents derived their constitution from four others, who in their turn

were dependent on eight parents. Thus, going back only to the third generation, there were fourteen people whose physical, mental, and moral characteristics must have affected that child's personality; and if we take in the fourth generation, there will have been thirty people every one of whom, perhaps, must have been perfect before that ideal child could appear. Look around your own circle of acquaintance and consider how many of them are qualified in health and heart and intellect to become the progenitors of such a child. The law of heredity is, I suppose, as indisputable as the law of gravitation. It may be that it is counteracted to some extent by that mysterious recuperative force in Nature which is always making for health and soundness; but apart from this, the law of heredity is inexorable, and for aught I or anybody else can tell, the health and vigour, the capability and beauty of the youngest and healthiest child among us at the present moment may be qualified by the follies and vices, the diseases and misfortunes of progenitors innumerable generations ago. Whether we can so much as imagine a perfect specimen of childhood may be open to question therefore.

But let it be assumed that we have the child of an immaculate ancestry, born into an atmosphere of never-failing love and affection, nurtured and brought up in an environment minutely adapted to all its needs, and trained and taught by parents and teachers whose whole nature is in complete harmony with all that is good and healthy and wise in the universe. To imagine this is merely to imagine what it is inherently probable a Creator of perfect wisdom and goodness would have desired and would have designed.

Is it conceivable that into that perfect life and its perfect surroundings a Divine beneficence would, for any ulterior purposes, have introduced a little leaven of evil? It appears to me quite unthinkable.

Here is the perfect life; what sort of a world must it be that is entirely adapted to it? Must it be a world all sunbeams and zephyrs—totally without anything like hardship or difficulty, anything calculated to tax endurance and stimulate energy? Would such a world be at all adapted to human nature even on its lowest plane, at its very dawn—a nature bounding with healthy life and vigour, bright with waxing intelligence, flaming with ardour and curiosity, absolutely fearless, and radiant with an affectionate kindliness towards every living thing?

No; such a world, of course, would be totally lacking just that which gives life its greatest zest, and which is quite essential to health and happiness—something difficult to achieve, something that demands effort, something that fills the mind with interest and gives a purpose to existence. It must be a world full of variety and sharp contrasts and exhaustless interests, affording the fullest scope for every faculty of mind and body. In short, it would need to be just about such a world as our own—but without its maladjustments. In a material world like this, is it to be supposed that because human powers in their earliest development could not find exercise in chasing and killing the lower animals around, or in the dangers and excitements of savage warfare, therefore those powers must necessarily lack scope and exercise and must remain stagnant and undeveloped? As I have said before, if you take away hunting, you no doubt take away much that has contributed

to the development of human nature in certain directions. But what developments have these things prevented?

If the world had unfolded just as it probably was originally designed to do, human childhood would, from the earliest stages of humanity, have been trained and taught, so far as right and natural principles are concerned, just as you and I would like to have our children brought up if we could realise all our highest ideals for them. Can you seriously suppose that a period of hunting and snaring and trapping has been divinely ordained as absolutely essential to the early development of the human race, while for your own children such a stage of education is a thing that not only you never think about, but would regard with the strongest aversion if proposed for them? Of course there are plenty of people who will stoutly maintain that fox-hunting and battue-shooting and deer-stalking are among the best of educators, and who will feel, and perhaps express, the greatest contempt for poor spiritless creatures who are rather sickened with what some critical Frenchman has declared to be the Englishman's idea of a holiday—"We've got a holiday to-day; let's go out and kill something." There are plenty of people still with so much of the primeval savage in their composition that the original avocations of the race are quite natural to them. But are they the highest type of the people you know? Is theirs the type towards which the whole course of civilisation and education and culture seems to be tending? Not so very far back in the history of the human race they were the people who despised all civil employment, and thought war

and tournaments in the lists the only occupations worthy of their manhood. When this standard came to be slowly hauled down, they found vent for their innate ferocity in pugilism and bull-baiting, cock-fighting and deer-hunting, and they did grace and honour to their ladies by reserving for their fair hands the cutting of the throat of the captured stag as it lay panting and sobbing in the circle of hounds. Now it is partridge and pheasant shooting, fox-hunting and rabbit-coursing that have come to be regarded as occupations in which gentlemen may engage without derogating from their dignity, and ladies will sit by and wager kid gloves on the results of pigeon-shooting. But is any of this essential to a life's education? Of course it is not. These things are the manifestations of old instincts visibly ebbing away under the play of that mysterious force which is struggling to bring back all life and all its surroundings into "the kingdom of God"—under the domination, that is to say, of the laws and the love of the Creator.

There would have been no hunting or warring for the training of primeval youth. What then would have been left? Why, just about what you, if you are educated and thoughtful and high-minded, would desire for your children—all kinds of physical sports and pastimes, observant and affectionate familiarity with the animal creation around, some amount of travel, and constant enjoyment of all the delights of nature, woodland and stream, plain and mountain, clouds and waves, flowers and fruits, and all the sweet vicissitudes of the seasons. The earliest race of man, if his faculties had all been perfectly healthy and symmetrically developed, would have

been irresistibly allured to the acquisition of knowledge by all that was wonderful and mysterious in Nature, and the young and the eager, full of the happy life of perfect health, would have imbibed from the elders such knowledge as the world's age had accumulated, with thirsty avidity. And all the infinitely varied faculties of human nature would have unfolded—not under the devilish pressure of hate and cruelty and greed, of fear and superstition, of lust and pride and ambition—not under the stimulus of that "sum of all villainies," war; but sweetly and purely and naturally, as the rose we have been musing over unfolds its petals under the showers and sunshine of a world especially adapted to it. Childhood and youth would have been a time of fun and frolic, untouched by frailty and sickness, undarkened by sadness and sorrow. It would have been a time of physical training and education, from which, from the moment the spiritual nature of the race had begun to recognise the First Great Cause, it would have been as impossible to separate religion as it would be to make a distinction between colour and light. Education would have been simply the study of God's works and God's laws, and men's efforts to fathom all the mystery of them and to appropriate all their wealth and power. Think of the birth of Music in such a world, the gradual dawning of Art and Literature, the revealing one after another of the principles of natural science and of mechanical invention. And as mind advances to a clearer and clearer recognition of Deity, imagine the pæans of rejoicing when some keen intellect unfolds for the first time another law of the kingdom of God —a law on which the safety of the happy world

depends, and with which the whole human race may at once put themselves in line and march onward and upward with a firmer step and a quicker pace and a warmer glow of love to God and man! What rejoicing when some primitive mechanical genius, all afire with a burning ambition to win the affection and approbation of his fellow-men, lights on some invention that will save toil or facilitate production or conduce to comfort and convenience! What a grand chorus of praise and thanksgiving would make the woods ring and the rocks resound as some new discovery gives a fresh glimpse of the transcendent power of the Creator, of the unfathomable depths of His wisdom and goodness, and lights up the pathway of the future with the rosy light of fresh hopes and higher levels of attainment!

These are the possibilities in the midst of which the world's infancy might have been nurtured, and will you tell me that these deep, strong currents of influence could not have availed for the unfolding of faculty, that hunting and warfare were necessary as a stimulus to exertion, and that the world's life could not have developed without them? Go to, Sir! And you a scientific man! Can you for a moment reflect on such incentives to effort as would have throbbed in every pulse of a young world permeated and suffused by a noble "enthusiasm of humanity," and doubt as to whether boomerangs and scalping-knives, trade competition and patent laws may not have been necessary incentives to progress?

Youth, with its bounding health and unclouded spirits, and faculties and tastes and inclinations as varied as the beauty of the human form and face, merges into manhood, and all the fields of enterprise

and activity of which we know anything would lie out before it—all but those fields that have been drenched with blood and tears, and darkened by cruelty and wrong and injustice. Tillage, architecture, navigation, exploration, manufacture, engineering, mechanics, painting, sculpture, literature, music, science, social organisation—all these fields open before the young life of the world, and imperative needs and keen desires, and the vigour of perfect health to press the race onward, and yet need the chase and the battlefield? All these things would have been in the direct course of evolution, and perfect human nature would have found in the thirst for knowledge, in the irrepressible craving for practical activity, in the love of human kind, and in the entrancing consciousness of being in the full current of Divine energy pulsing through every fibre of creation, motive impulse a thousand times more effective and potent, in its steady, uniform fervour, than any instinct that ever animated the hunter or the warrior, though perhaps not so fierce and furious in occasional intensity.

And here we come to a point at which the question we have all along been discussing will be found to have a very practical bearing on present-day affairs.

I have been contending—let me recapitulate for the sake of clearness—that at the point in the evolution of life at which sensation and consciousness began to dawn there must also have been evolved two conflicting forces—selfishness and love. I have been arguing that a broad and general survey of all we know of creation leads irresistibly to the conclusion that it must have been the design of the

Creator that love should have been universally the dominant force, and that this would have been a law as universal and invariable as the law of gravitation. The rule of selfishness would always have asserted itself as a strictly subordinate force. The manifest truth that that has not been the case is, I have been contending, to be attributed to the fact that at a momentous point a disturbing influence was exerted. The result of the "maladjustment," as I have been endeavouring to show, has been a radical change in the nature of much of the life subsequently evolved. It seems equally clear that a secondary result would be a radical alteration of the whole organisation of society.

As a matter of fact, existing human society has been built up on a basis of selfishness tempered by beneficence. If, instead, it had been built up on a basis of beneficence qualified by selfishness, it is obvious enough that the whole fabric would have been different. The selfish instincts of mankind, though not by any means universally prevalent, have at least laid the broad lines of our social edifice, and have shaped and characterised every part of it. Beneficence ought to have done so. We are all, I suppose, more or less conscious that there is something radically wrong in our social system. And that is just what *is* wrong. It is based on selfishness mitigated by beneficence. It should have been based on beneficence qualified by only necessary selfishness. We are all conscious that something is wrong; we all at times find ourselves haunted by visions of what might be, and the more sanguine and buoyant among us are strong in the conviction that these haunting visions are slowly becoming realisa-

tions. What does it all mean? What is all this altruism, taking so many forms, moving on in so many planes, but all seeking the same end—the harmony and the happiness of the world? What does it mean? Why, just this: That the Creator's one great supreme rule of beneficence, that should have dominated all thought, directed every impulse, prompted every act in the grand procession of life, is slowly reasserting itself. God above and the altruists below are striving to bring all things under the beneficent control of that great rule of conduct intended to prevail from the very dawn of creation.

Let us get back once more to that ideal individual in an ideal world. The healthy, happy, and sportive child, brought up in an atmosphere of affection, trained to love all the works of creation, and never so much as questioning the Divine source of all its happiness, advances to perfect manhood. A social "individualist" will he be? A firm believer in free and unlimited competition? Ambitious to push his way in the world, to elbow himself to the front, to become famous or make a fortune or found a family?

How can he be? I am assuming that the man is perfect in his nature, perfect in his whole life's development, and perfect in his entire environment. You cannot imagine such a man framing his future on any such lines as these, simply because they are lines of unmitigated selfishness and the ruling spirit of his life is the very opposite of this. You might as well suppose that some member of a family united in the bonds of the happiest affection and the healthiest home interests should make it the

business of his life to get the advantage of them all and aggrandise himself at their expense. A perfectly sweet and healthy nature, strongly imbued with home love, could not possibly do this — not because he could not if he would, but because he would not. He is quite free to do it, but all his habits of thought, all his sympathies and desires, the whole mental and moral constitution of the man render him incapable of it. And not only is he himself constitutionally incapable of taking such a line, but his home environment is all unfavourable to it. Why should he seek to get the better of them, when they all wish him the very best that he can wish for himself? That is just the position of this ideal life in this ideal world. Imagine the humorous amazement of this young man, if a denizen of some competitive sphere should present himself and offer to give a few business wrinkles and suggestions for a really spirited, go-ahead commercial enterprise.

"Organise the labour of my fellow-men for my individual profit? Why should I wish to do that? What right have I to do it?"

"Well, you know, you are an exceptionally capable man. Not one in a thousand has your business ability."

"But why should I make use of my ability, if I have it, exclusively for my own benefit?"

"What is the use of having special endowment unless it gives you special advantages?"

"But if I have any special endowment," smiles this model citizen of a model world, "it does give me special advantages. It greatly enhances my public usefulness, and secures me the confidence and

esteem of those around me. It is therefore a source of great happiness to me."

"Well, but you have not only ability, but you are wonderfully energetic," argues the 'cute stranger. "If you are exceptionally gifted and industrious while others are idle and totally lacking in *nous* and faculty, it is only just that you shall have more than they."

"But, my friend, others are not idle. They are all healthy, and that being so, activity is essential to happy life. We all work to the best of our ability in one way or another. If I work harder than some others, it is because I perhaps more heartily enjoy my work. That some are comparatively poor in endowment I grant you, but surely you do not mean to say that that is a reason why they should be worse off than others. Of course they have a special claim on the services of all who can help them, and we organise and direct them for their own and the general good; but as to organising them for one's own personal advantage—why, my friend, what a strange world yours must be!"

Now there would be nothing at all extraordinary in such a sentiment. To such a nature in such a world that would not be a "goody-goody" attitude at all. It would not be "charitable," it would not in our sense of the word be "religious." It would be simply natural—just as natural as it would be for you to refuse to organise the activity of your own children as a means of enabling you to live in ease and luxury. You have an affection for them which is stronger than any love of your own ease and self-indulgence, and that would have been precisely the case with this individual life with regard to the world around.

Even that perfect man in such a world as *this* would find it extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to act on his principles. He would often have the distress of seeing that his willingness to work for the good of others would be taken advantage of by the idle and the profligate, and would frequently be productive of the gravest evil. That is the confusion of "maladjustment." But that perfect individual is in a perfect environment. In such a world each would be willing to work for all and all for each. And the more completely this were done, the more imperative would be the necessity for systematic orderly methods.

That, under such conditions as we are supposing, society would very early have been an elaborate organisation is not to be questioned. Under a régime of perfect natural law, a social and industrial chaos such as we find so largely prevailing around us would have been impossible. The highest general good and the utmost possible freedom, as well as the universal wish, would alike have required method, system, order, organisation. Individualism is, of course, the absence of system and organisation, and would have been quite impossible in a world without maladjustments, not because everybody would be forced into co-operative activity with his fellows, but because the folly of any kind of serious work without it would be so obvious. Nobody would think of such a thing. The perfect human society of a perfect world would in one sense be the very highest and most elaborate embodiment of law; in another sense it would be a complete anarchism. The "laws" of society in such a case would be simply the universal assent to certain principles of action

and the conduct of life. These laws would be enunciated through the constituted authorities giving expression to the universal wish, and they would enforce themselves as automatically as do the natural laws of the physical world. There would be no compulsion and no penalties. A policeman in such a world would be as much of a curiosity as the great aerolite in the British Museum. He would be studied with the greatest interest, as throwing some light on the nature and constitution of society in some other world.

It is just a dim and undefined perception of this that is at the back of the "anarchist" idea, so far as I can make it out. The anarchists have a notion of a world without penalty-enforced law, and for a society in which there is universal assent to ascertained right principle it is a perfectly sound and feasible notion too. It is clear that, in a city in which every person was honest, there would be no need for a law against picking pockets. But so long as there are pickpockets about, the disestablishment of policemen certainly appears to be a little "too previous." So long as assent to the right is not universal, some positive and punitive method of dealing with wrong seems essential. Penalties seem necessary. When assent is universal, the "law" has established its supremacy without them, opposition has vanished, and penalties have fallen into the category of disused weapons. "Anarchy" comes in rightly and naturally. Yet this "anarchy" is the very universality of law.

All this seems to be very elementary, and, so far as I can judge of the matter, it is all quite indisputable. Yet I am afraid a great many good

Christian people who may read this will be sorely puzzled by it. A good deal of what I have been saying has, they will admit, a certain smack of the Scriptures and almost a "Gospel ring" about it. But it somehow also has a certain twang of Socialism. Whether it is really Gospel or whether it is Socialism in disguise, for the life of them they will not be able to make out. That it may be both Gospel and Socialism will be an idea not easily apprehended. They will admit the religious tone of much that has been said. After all, they will reflect perhaps, this harmonious world we have been imagining is but a world in which every man loves his neighbour as himself, but then the thing seems somehow to have been twisted to a very dubious application to the social affairs of the world. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," the world has been praying for centuries, and what we have been picturing certainly seems something like the kingdom of God on earth. But we have somehow got things hind-before. We have been beginning with the millennium instead of leaving off with it. Many of the old prophets of the Bible seem to have had a very clear vision of such a world as we have been supposing—a world that should be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"—a world in which "they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." Generation after generation of people have mused over such passages, and have believed in a vague way that somehow, some day, this great change will come about. It has to a large extent, however, been merely a "pious opinion," with very little practical effect in any way,

and earth and heaven have been so mixed up in their musings that few people could state very clearly what it is they do or do not believe in the matter.

But, however definite or indefinite ideas may be upon the subject, there is generally in the mind of the average religious believer a strong objection to anything that has the appearance of an attempt to put a reformed earth here in the place of a heaven hereafter. I have been endeavouring to show that, quite apart from any consideration of a heaven above, this world might at any rate have been a heaven below. But the truth is that a heaven below is not at all what the majority of Christians have been accustomed to think of, and, indeed, to a great many the idea of such a thing will seem almost irreligious. They have always thought of life in this world as a mere pilgrimage, a wandering in the wilderness, a time of trial and suffering and probation, and to suggest that it might have been a state of perfect existence tends at once to raise a doubt as to the probability of anything beyond. Now to my mind a higher life hereafter would be not only a perfectly natural sequence and development of a perfect life here, but, in the light of modern science especially, it would be a necessary sequence and development.

Let us follow up that ideal life to its close. Childhood, youth, the prime of manhood pass away in health and vigour and happy activity, and then the shadows begin to lengthen, old age steals gently on, the forces of life begin to spend themselves. Little by little the senses begin to lose their keenness, and imperceptibly earth begins to

recede. I have sometimes thought that even in the infirmities of age there is evidence of a beneficent purpose. Take the faculty of sight, for instance. The eye when directed to a distant object, at any period of life, is in a state of rest. This is its normal condition. There are no muscles employed. The rays of light coming from a distant object merely pass through the pupil of the eye on to the retina behind. But to focus the sight upon anything near at hand, muscular effort is required to pull the crystalline lens of the eye into greater convexity. Quite apart from disease, as age creeps on, these muscles gradually lose their power thus to modify the form of the optic lens. Hence it is, as most persons are aware, that towards the close of life near sight gradually fails, while the longer range of vision, depending merely on the normal form of the vitreous lens, is always the same. The practical effect—if not actually designed—is imperceptibly to withdraw from the aged the forms and faces of those around, and the mind is thus gently weaned from all the strongest and tenderest associations of daily life, while over all the rest of the senses and sensibilities there creeps a benumbing lethargy. And so the impassivity of extreme old age steals on, and in the healthy, really natural, and kindly course of things death comes merely as sleep after a long day's work. There is no terror or sadness, no pain, no evil whatever in the close of such a life, either for the individual or for those around. It is merely the fading of a flower, the dropping of fruit in the late autumn, the dying out of the light of day to the dreamy music of the birds and the babbling of the brooks. It is as painless

and placid, as easy and natural to die as, in a world of perfect health, there is abundant reason to believe, it would be to be born. The terrors both of birth and of death are undoubtedly terrors of "maladjustment" only.

And the hereafter? Well, if there *were* no hereafter, such a life here would have been quite worthy of Divine Fatherhood, a thing for which all hearts might continually break forth in praise and thanksgiving.

But the truth is, it appears to me, that to conceive of that close of an earthly career as finality is to conceive of what is in the last degree improbable, and the speculations of modern science have immensely strengthened this improbability.

There are two considerations which, I think, tell heavily against such a supposition. In the first place, although it may be true that in such a placid decline and death there would be nothing to be dreaded to a healthy nature, there must always be something melancholy in the anticipation of extinction. I daresay this is a matter upon which different minds will take very different views. Under existing conditions of life in the world as we find it there are many—perhaps a majority of people who, weary with the struggle and saddened by disappointment and unrealised hopes, have no great desire for existence hereafter. Life upon the whole has been with them an unsatisfactory experience, and the future, if there is to be any future, is altogether too dubious. Better to think of an unending sleep—no more toil and trouble, no more care and anxiety—only unbroken rest and forgetfulness. Probably most people feel this at times.

But no man feels that in the prime of health and strength. It is essentially the outcome of weakness and unhappiness. Only let the body be full of vigour, and the heart at ease, and the mind steeped in sunshine, and the thought of extinction becomes a dread. Under the chilling apprehension of it, the decline of life could not be altogether happy, the human spirit could hardly attain its highest perfection. Hope and enthusiasm must inevitably die down, moral energies must flag, and the whole nature lose more or less of its elasticity, its buoyancy, its expansiveness. Even loyalty and gratitude to the Creator must, one would think, be damped and contracted by the ever-recurring thought that His loving-kindness to the individual man is limited to a brief threescore years and ten or so. The highest possibilities of nature, however mature, seem to demand perpetual looking upward and reaching forward. Who are the cheeriest and brightest and happiest old people you know? Mark them carefully, and you will find, I think, that they are of two classes. There are the totally unreflecting —those who live entirely in the day that is theirs, and think little or nothing of the morrow; or there are those who are happy and serene in the belief that they are moving gently on to a better world. Take away that hope from a really thoughtful elderly man, and every ray of the setting sun is tinged with sadness. For my own part, I do not see how this could be otherwise, and the happier the life, the sadder becomes the thought of the time when not even the memory of it will be left. Perhaps a man of genuine goodness—like the old man we have been considering—a man of sweet and

healthy nature and well-balanced mind, might preserve to the end his equanimity, his serenity and cheerfulness, his love to God and man, as he gets, one after another, indications of declining powers and monitions of decay ; but it is inconceivable that that man's latter half of life will be on as high and happy a plane, under the shadow of coming extinction, as it would be under a consciousness that the gentle decay of his powers was but the falling away of the material from the spiritual—was but the process of translation to an existence on a higher level, for which all his happy life had been a training and a preparation.

Life, then, it seems to me, could not be perfect—could not be at its highest and its best, from the cradle to the grave—without the glow of a sunset that gilds the sky and makes it rosy with a great hope.

All that, however, many may put down as mere sentiment. The second consideration I have to urge is one that cannot be thus set aside. It deals with matter of scientific fact, and appeals more particularly to practical men, and especially to evolutionists.

I have just said that to conceive of the close of a career on this planet as finality is to conceive of what is in the last degree improbable, and that the speculations of modern science have immensely strengthened this improbability. All we know of the universe is suggestive, if not of infinity, at all events of a scheme of evolution on so sublime a scale that our little local system of things is of the pettiest and most insignificant importance and magnitude. But small and insignificant as it is, if it were possible to imagine the absolute perpetuity of this earth of ours, and that to all eternity a human race

continually rising in the scale of being would appear upon it, it would be a scheme of things worthy of a Creator of infinite attributes. It would be a scheme of infinite duration and of infinite growth and development. It would be a scheme which, though strictly limited to this earth, would nevertheless be quite unlimited in the possibilities of higher and higher forms of life.

But unless all our scientific men are at fault, it is quite impossible to conceive of such a thing. This planet of ours is running a course, the limit of which —approximately at all events—they are able to determine. It has been a mass of fiery fluid. The surface of it has cooled down until, for a time, it has become a habitable globe. The heart of the planet is still molten fire, which every now and again belches out from volcanic craters, and the heat of which becomes overpowering in our deepest mines. But the interior is still cooling down, just as the surface has done, and the time must come when that process of cooling will have attained a point when neither animal nor vegetable life will be possible. The habitable earth has yet to run for a period of time which it baffles all our faculties to realise, but that it is a limited period is quite certain. If, therefore, nothing is evolved from the highest life on this planet, and men fall back into the dust like mushrooms or apple trees, then at the end of that period there is an entire end of the scheme. The course of the world and all its vital energy is a *cul de sac.* It leads to nothing, and the whole process of life on our planet, vast as that process is, is an absolutely isolated fact in creation. It has no connection with any phase or form of life that there may

be anywhere in the universe. It slowly creeps up to its climax, and then it sinks down to decay and death and eternal silence, and nothing comes of it.

But finality of that absolute kind is entirely inconsistent with all we know of creation, and seems to be more and more certainly to be refuted by every advance we make in scientific knowledge. The philosophy of evolution itself is dead against any such presumption. If there is any truth at all in its teaching, we must believe that life is an organic whole, and that the physical universe is one vast coherent scheme. The whole system of things, as science now shows it to us, energised by the same forces, made substantially of the same elementary matter, bound together by one code of law, is running the same course of evolution. Every discovery we make tends to contradict any theory of a disconnected congeries of worlds each with its own finite system of things, and it points more and more unequivocally to the probability that the evolution of the life of this earth is but a stage in an evolution on a higher and a grander scale.

But if that old man whom we have laid to rest has really come to the end of his career, if his experience is entirely confined to this earth, then all the sublimest speculations of science on this matter are delusions. The world we live in and the worlds we see around us are parts of a coherent scheme only in a material sense. They lie, it may be, in the same boundless ocean of ether, they are held together by the same law of gravitation, light and electricity may play from one to the other; but as to any grand scheme of vitality common to them all—which seems to be their only *raison d'être*—there is nothing of the

kind. Every little planet—even one so small as our own—has its own little scheme of evolution. It runs its own little course, glows with light and life for its allotted period, and then goes out absolutely with no result.

I say that that is totally inconsistent with all the latest teaching of science, every revelation of which points not to indefinite multiplication of petty little schemes, but to a grand unity of design. It is right in the teeth of every hint and suggestion of well-authenticated fact. It was always improbable; the philosophy of evolution renders it far more improbable than ever.

But, on the other hand, if that old man, after running a happy course in a perfectly congenial world, merely lays down the physical frame which has become a clog upon his spirit and can no longer serve its progressive purposes, to rise to another stage of evolving life, then the finite, the strictly limited course of the world becomes intelligible, and the human career is entirely in accordance with the world's evolution. From the dawn of creation, so far as we can know anything of it, matter and force have remained exactly what they were. They have taken innumerable forms, have entered into innumerable combinations merely to serve the progressive purposes of life. Having served those purposes, they fall back to their original insignificance—themselves without the slightest change or improvement—leaving life to pursue its upward course of development. At ten thousand points along that line of development they have thus served the purposes of life, and have fallen away like obsequious subjects posted along the road to facilitate the progress of their monarch, and dropping

back when Majesty has swept by. Every successive combination of matter and force has died down, leaving some higher manifestation of life. We note the dying down of matter and we call it death. But while we are wringing our hands over "death," life is sweeping on its regal course.

"Ay," says the scientific man, "for the race, but not for the individual."

Nonsense, Sir! nonsense! If that old man has died absolutely and utterly, and if all other old men die like him, what becomes of your race when the planet has run its little course and the ice of the Arctic and Antarctic regions have met at the Equator and have extinguished every pulse of life? There, surely, must be the end of it.

"Yes," says the scientific man, "that is undeniable, but why shouldn't there be an end of it? May it not be that, by the time that end is reached, life upon the whole may prove to have been quite satisfactory? It may be that, when 'maladjustments' have been eliminated and laws have come to be understood and universally submitted to, there may be for this tormented world of ours long æons of happy life that will more than compensate for the horrors of its evolution and perhaps the still greater horrors of its decline from its zenith."

But I have been contending, and I still contend, that it is not enough that humanity shall come universally to understand the laws of Nature and to fall in with them. Those laws themselves work evil and need to be adjusted, and you have to show how that fact is to be reconciled with the supposition that life upon the whole will be such a course of happiness as you suggest. Such a course surely implies beneficence

in the design and carrying out of it all; but how is that beneficence to be reconciled with "the horrors of evolution and perhaps the still greater horrors of decline"? Moreover, as I have already pointed out, terrestrial life is in that case an absolutely isolated fact, and, having regard to the masses and the spaces of the heavens above us, probably a most trivial and insignificant fact. What becomes of those sublime theories of universal evolution? Are all the habitable bodies, great and small, that your telescopes have been continually detecting farther and farther out in the awful void similarly isolated and limited facts? Is not this rather a poor parochial sort of conception of the universe? And looking out upon what science has lately been discovering in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, is it at all a probable conception?

The fact is, the whole course of scientific knowledge ever since science began has been tending to lead the thoughts of men in precisely the other direction. The bounds of creation have been continually stretching out; laws have had a more magnificent sweep; manifestations of power are everywhere seen to be more awful in their grandeur and sublimity; and the presumption grows stronger and stronger that nowhere in the realms of space is there such a thing as an isolated fact or a petty, self-contained scheme. All are parts of a magnificent whole, and over the whole the Creator shall reign with a sway absolutely undisputed.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ORIGIN OF SATAN—THREE CONCEIVABLE HYPOTHESES

THE earlier editions of this book have received a great deal of attention from the reviewers, who have pronounced upon it with a diversity of opinion that has been really quite droll. One grave pundit has put a supercilious nose into it for at least five minutes, and—in a paper edited, I understand, by the author of *Is Life Worth Living?*—has straightway pronounced it by far the most ridiculous book of its kind he has met with for years. Another declares that it is a pleasure to read a book so powerful in grasp, so clear and vigorous in style. So generally respected a paper as the *Academy* seems to find the book full of irreverence and absurdity, though it is compassionate enough to add that "Our author is, we are sure, quite unconscious of it." A very highly esteemed doctor of divinity, at the head of an Oxford college, discovers in the book just one point for special commendation, and that happens to be the reverent way in which the difficult subject is handled. The *Academy*, I am sorry to say, also finds that the unhappy author's

reasoning "is of childlike simplicity"; the *Church Times* thinks there "can be no question about the courage, or the keen logic and the lucid style of this fascinating treatment of a problem which is of pathetic interest to all of us"; and the *Manchester Guardian* refers to it as a "closely reasoned work," a book "of more than common thoughtfulness, suggestiveness, and vigour."

And so I might go on, balancing one opinion against another, until, if I dared to do it, I might almost doubt whether some of the very clever people into whose hands the book has fallen for review could be altogether competent instructors for the reading public, who are supposed to sit at their feet. Newspapers, secular and religious, High Church and Broad Church, Trinitarians and Unitarians, Spiritualists, Methodists, Congregationalists, Agnostics and Atheists, have all had something to say about this small volume; and, upon the whole, their comments have been very kind and complimentary. I should indeed be the most graceless of mortals if I were not more than satisfied by many of the flattering things that have been said about it, both in the public press and in private correspondence. But even those who have been most generous in their recognition of any good points there may be in the book have for the most part—though by no means all of them—expressed themselves unsatisfied by its general conclusions. I am compelled to admit, therefore, that it has so far been a failure. The circulation of the book appears to have been fairly satisfactory; but if the primary purpose of a work of this kind is to carry conviction to the mind of the reader, it cannot be said altogether to have succeeded.

The fault that almost all the more serious of the critics have found is, not that it is irreverent or ridiculous, or wanting in force of argument, but that even if the conclusions for which it contends be admitted, there will still remain the final mystery of evil to be solved. One or two reviewers have looked down upon the matter from a lofty height of superior acuteness, and in tones of contemptuous pity have assumed that I was all unaware of what they could see so clearly.

"He does not see that, even when he has concluded that evil must be the work of an evil person," says the *Academy*, "he has only pushed the difficulty one step farther back. We have still to discover the origin of the evil person."

That shows what close attention and conscientious care the reviewer must have bestowed upon the laborious efforts of the unlucky author, upon whose childlike reasoning and general absurdity he has come down with such merciless severity. If, before setting out upon his masterly exposure of the book, he had condescended to read it only so far as page 8—really it does not seem unreasonable to expect that any reviewer would skim a book through as far as that before ruthlessly consigning it to the butter shop—if he had only read it as far as page 8, he would have found that I had stated that difficulty myself in the clearest and the most unequivocal language. I admitted that no theory of evil can get altogether rid of mystery. But in writing this book I was simple enough to suppose that if there could be shown reasonable ground for the belief that evil had formed no part in the Creator's original scheme of things, though it might only be

pushing the difficulty one step farther back, that one step would be a real and stupendous advantage. Not only would it relieve the character of the Creator from direct responsibility for the world's sorrow and suffering, but it would afford a very strong presumption indeed in favour of the supposition that, if we *could* finally solve the mystery, we should find that not even indirectly had the Creator intended the evil of the world. I had hoped that the more thoughtful of the religious papers would have recognised the clear advantage of this one great step, even though it did not carry us quite to the end of the difficulty. Some of them have done so. The *Methodist Times*, for instance, expresses the keenest satisfaction with the argument so far as it goes, and the *Church Times* and the *Church of To-day* do the same, both of them in very earnest and able notices.

But a great many other influential organs of religious opinion refuse to be persuaded that evil is to be attributed to an evil power, because they are unable to see, and I am unable positively to tell them, how that evil power came into existence. My contention is that, upon the whole, the general scheme of things is manifestly beneficent in its purpose. The evil inherent in it is a disturbance, and, I hold, points unmistakably to a malignant disturber. Surely it cannot be reasonable altogether to reject evidence of that disturber's existence, because I cannot tell how he originally came to exist, and what is precisely his relation to the Creator.

Let us take an analogous case in the sphere of physical science. In the earlier part of this century

it was observed that the planet Uranus, in its progress round the sun, was pursuing a slightly erratic course, for which there were no visible means of accounting. Two prominent astronomers, Adams of Cambridge and Leverrier of Paris, appear to have turned attention to the subject at the same time, and independently of each other they both came to the conclusion that it was impossible to account for this slight disturbance, in what would otherwise have been a perfectly regular and orderly movement of the planet, except on the supposition that farther out in space was another planet whose attractive power was diverting Uranus from its true course, but whose existence nobody had ever suspected. They were able to work out an orbit around which Uranus would have moved but for the aberration occasioned by this outer attraction. Would it have been reasonable to reject all evidence of the existence of that body until Adams and Leverrier could declare positively how that unknown planet Neptune could possibly have got to be just where it was? Of course it would not. The existence of Neptune in that particular position might come to be a subject of much importance and interest when fully established. Its origin, its age and condition, and its relation to other planets and to its central sun, might all be subjects for curious and important investigation, but they would all be separate subjects. What these astronomers first established was that the course of Uranus was not the course which all the known circumstances required. In a similar way I have pointed out reasons for believing that the course of creation is not the course that could have been designed by a beneficent Creator. There

is distinct evidence of disturbance. The original purpose of this book was to set forth that evidence, to show what would probably have been the course of creation had a beneficent Creator alone been concerned in it, to suggest that the actual course pointed unmistakably to a disturbing power, and to conjecture what that disturbing power must in all probability be.

The astronomers, having to do with a purely physical question, were able to turn their telescopes to the point in the heavens indicated by their calculations, and there they actually discovered the disturbing body just about where they said it must be. But suppose they had not actually discovered it there? Would that entirely have upset their evidence of disturbance in the orbit of Uranus? Would it have proved that the course the planet was pursuing was a perfectly normal course? Clearly it would not. All the evidence as to the perturbation of Uranus would have been quite untouched, and it would have been just as easy as before to show with mathematical certainty that a sphere of a certain mass at a certain point in the heavens would exactly produce all the phenomena observed in the orbit of the planet. They could and they did demonstrate the existence of this disturber before they had discovered it by actual observation, and if they never had discovered it by actual observation it could not have proved it was not there; it would only have proved that they could not see it, and that might have been attributable to the shortcomings of their instruments or to some unknown condition in the heavens.

Now this very well illustrates the case between

myself and some of my critics. Here is a scheme of creation which, I contend, presents overwhelming evidence of having been beneficently designed, but the scheme as a whole is marred by what I have endeavoured to show is a comparatively slight disturbance. The course of things is not exactly what it would have been if there had been no disturbance. Just as the astronomers showed that all the movements of Uranus might be accounted for upon the hypothesis of an unknown body in the heavens, so I have endeavoured to show that all that is abnormal, all that is evil in the world, may be accounted for by the existence of an unknown spiritual body in the universe. In attempting thus to demonstrate the existence of a spiritual disturbing power, I am obviously at a disadvantage as compared with the physicists who have to do with material bodies. I cannot do my demonstration by mathematical formulæ as Adams and Leverrier did, nor am I able to confirm its accuracy by means of the telescope. One of my critics seems to grumble because I cannot. The *Westminster Review* says I appear to have some peculiar ideas as to the meaning of "scientific," and complains that I have not justified the expectations which my title and preface arouse in the minds of readers. Apparently the reviewer considers that I should have conducted my arguments by the aid of the differential calculus or spectroscopic analysis or psycho-photography at the very least. Unfortunately the nature of the inquiry does not permit of this, but the essence of all science I take to be the deduction of logical inferences from accurately observed facts, and the way for the *Westminster Review* to discredit my claim to be scientific in the treatment

of the subject is to show that my facts are not facts, or that my reasoning from them is unsound, and this it has not attempted to do.

There are two distinct questions involved in this matter. First, can there be shown reasonable ground for believing that an evil power is responsible for the evil of creation? That is a question in answer to which it seemed to me possible to adduce evidence of a palpable, positive kind. To the discussion of that question I confined the first edition of this book. The conclusion I arrived at is that there *must be* an evil power; that the Creator is *not*, at any rate directly, responsible for the evil in nature and life.

But then, of course, arises the second question—How did that evil power come into existence? I did not attempt to deal with this, for the simple reason that—apart from the Bible, the authority of which I deliberately ruled out—there is not a particle of evidence to be had from any quarter whatever. We know, and we can *know*, simply nothing about it. But of course we may conjecture, we may speculate on the subject and balance probabilities, and since so large a proportion of the critics of the book seem to insist that the argument is incomplete without some discussion of this second question, I will briefly deal with it.

There are three hypotheses that may be stated with regard to the existence of Satan, and so far as I can see there are only three. Assuming, as we are bound to do, from what we know of the creation as a whole, that the Creator is beneficent, there are two of these hypotheses either of which may conceivably be right. The third is to my mind blankly and absolutely incredible. That incredible hypothesis is

this: That a beneficent Creator having deliberately designed a scheme of things quite perfect in its goodness, its order, its harmony, should also have deliberately created an evil power to mar its perfection and to disturb its order and harmony for any conceivable purpose whatever. For the Creator to have done that would of course, as several of my critics argue, make Him responsible for the existence of all evil, even though the devil might be the immediate instrument of it. There appear to be some who believe that God made the devil—or as they prefer to have it nowadays, contrived maladjustments—to work evil that greater good may come. Let those who find it possible and satisfactory to believe this, do so. I cannot. If, as some of my critics appear to think, the drift of my book were towards this conclusion, then I should be forced to admit—as so many of them contend I *am* logically forced to admit—that the existence of Satan does not help the matter in the slightest. If God made the devil—*as* a devil and for purposes of evil—then God would of course be responsible for the evil. There would be no disputing that.

But the drift of the book is not at all towards such a conclusion. If I have shown, and in so far as I have shown, any reasonable ground for believing that the grand scheme of things was perfect, but that that scheme was subject to disturbance, just so far I have raised the strongest presumption against a conclusion so contradictory and absurd. If I have shown any reason for believing that the whole system of things, physical and moral, was intended to be good and only good, and that evil came only by disturbance, I must at the same time have been

showing good reason for the assumption that the creation of a being intended to effect that disturbance is quite incredible and ridiculous. The hypothesis that God made the devil for evil must, then, be dismissed as wholly untenable.

Now then for the two hypotheses, either of which may not inconceivably be true.

The first is that Satan is a self-existent being—independent, uncreated, like God Himself. This, I suppose, is the old Manichean idea, from which, theologians tell us, such frightful mischiefs resulted. It is easy to understand that mischief *would* result from it, whether true or false. People who believed that there were really two entirely independent powers, two self-existent gods in conflict, and, very much like ourselves, were not always certain whether the good or the evil were the stronger, would be very likely sometimes to incline to the service of one potency and sometimes to the other. Even nowadays people find it by no means easy always to believe, and to act on the belief, that right and goodness are ultimately greater powers than wrong and badness; and it is not difficult to understand that at a time when the two Manichean gods seemed to be dividing the allegiance of the world—at any rate the Persian world—a great prophetic spirit, flaming with the ardour and fervour of goodness, should have come forth boldly to declare the absolute and unqualified supremacy of the eternal God, and even His entire responsibility for evil. To a righteous soul like Isaiah, strong in his allegiance to the living God, and unfaltering in his faith in His supreme rulership, all perplexing and mysterious appearances notwithstanding, the Manichean tendencies of his time would

be distressing in the extreme, and it is not surprising to find him asserting that supreme rulership in the boldest and most uncompromising terms: "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things."

That splendidly audacious utterance of the prophet has been full of perplexity to millions of men in the past, and if it were to be taken literally as a divine utterance it would be full of perplexity now. It would make the Creator directly responsible for that which I have been endeavouring to show must be attributed to an enemy; but as an emphatic protest against the service of two gods, it is not only perfectly intelligible, but as I shall presently show, was in a very real, though not in a literal, sense so far true as to have been perfectly justifiable and necessary.

This theory of an independent, self-existing spirit of evil is so far credible that it is quite consistent with belief in a God of perfect goodness, though of course it implies a limitation of His power, as the existence of evil must do upon any hypothesis whatever. Assume a self-existent disturbing spirit, and the Creator is entirely exonerated from all moral responsibility for all the evils of creation and of life. You may think it—as I do very decidedly—an improbable theory; but at least it does not involve any actual inconsistency, any absurd contradiction. It does not involve you in the wild extravagance of believing that a purely beneficent God has planned a grand scheme, the very mainspring of which is cruelty in every conceivable form; nor does it require you to believe that the Creator first designed a good world, and then made a devil to spoil it.

For my own part, I unhesitatingly prefer the third and only remaining hypothesis, which—like the existence of Satan—happens to have the support of Biblical authority; though in both cases I have reasoned myself into the position I hold, without having been in the slightest degree consciously biassed by that authority.

And let me add parenthetically, that if, in thinking out what I believe to be true in these matters, I had found myself forced to conclusions adverse to Biblical theories as irresistibly as I have been forced to agree with them, I would have stated these conclusions just as fearlessly and unreservedly as I am endeavouring to do now.

I prefer to hold, as by far the more credible theory, that Satan was created, like everything else, for good and only good. But he was endowed, just as you and I are endowed, with free will, and in the exercise of that free will he fell.

"Ah! but then that fall must have been foreseen," you say, "and you are back again in your old difficulty. If God created Satan foreseeing that he would fall, He must have intended his fall, and is as much responsible for evil as though He had created him an evil being."

But that, you see, is assuming not only what you cannot possibly know as a fact, but what is on the face of it so extremely improbable, that nothing short of overwhelming evidence could make it reasonably credible. What ground have you for believing that God must have foreseen the lapse of Satan? You have none whatever, except the general assumption of the Creator's omnipotence and omniscience.

But when we speak of omnipotence we speak of

what in a literal sense of course cannot be. There are some things that God Himself cannot do. There are physical and moral and mathematical and logical impossibilities. God Himself cannot make two and two five, or make two parallel lines incline towards each other, or find a shorter way from London to Edinburgh than by a straight course. In the very nature of things there is, we can clearly see, a certain "intractability," a certain element of unyielding rigidity, which even what we call omnipotence cannot overcome.

And just as there are some things that God cannot do, so there may be some things that God cannot foresee. "Omniscience" may have its limitations as well as "omnipotence;" indeed, omniscience is of course implied in omnipotence. If God can do absolutely all things, He can foresee all things. If there are limitations to His power, there may be limitations to His foresight also. As I have just pointed out, there is no conceivable hypothesis which does not involve some limitation of power, and to my mind there is no point at which that limitation may be more reasonably assumed than just there, where foreknowledge and free will meet. About the attribute of free will we really know nothing. For aught we can tell there may be involved in it just that element of "intractability" of which I have just spoken.

Within the circumference of a circle there is only one point which can be its centre. Omnipotence itself cannot place that centre anywhere else. The moment it is shifted it ceases to be the centre. May it not be that that geometrical impossibility may be taken to illustrate a moral or psychical

impossibility? May it not be that free will which can be foreseen is not free will? Is it not possible that the Creator, having endowed a creature with His own attribute of absolute freedom, could not foresee how that freedom would be exercised? There must of course have been the clearly recognised possibility of falling—"free will" implies it; but it is one thing to recognise the possibility of a thing occurring, it is quite another thing to foresee that it will occur. We are beginning to understand that there are laws of mind, of spirit, of thought, as real and inexorable as the laws of matter, and those laws may have been designed for the preservation of free spirits in all their native uprightness and purity; and if you tell me that in that case the falling of one of those spirits involved a failure of law, I remind you once again that there is no imaginable theory which does not involve a limitation, or a failure of some kind or other, and all it is possible for us to do is to allocate the point at which that failure is most probable. In my judgment the point at which it seems most reasonable to believe that the great secret lies impenetrably concealed is in the mystery of free will. How, in the exercise of perfect freedom, the fall may have come about I, of course, cannot tell. If that fall was foreseen and deliberately designed, then undoubtedly the Creator is entirely responsible for all that has come of it. He has chosen to work by force and fraud; our "natural" impulses to do the same are in line with providence. Unlimited competition and the ruthless trampling down of the weak are but the fulfilments of divine purposes. Mr. Herbert Spencer, when he deprecates the pampering of the "unfit," may be a preacher sent

by God; Malthus was right when he taught that an outer fringe of wretchedness and starvation was a divinely ordained safety-belt for society, and the minor prophets among us are justified in maintaining that it is unphilosophical to combat drunkenness and disease, vice and starvation. These things should be left to kill off the unfit, and to leave as the survivors only those who can successfully resist them. This is the Creator's process of evolution. He foresaw it, He planned it, deliberately chose it; and your business in the world and mine is not to resist this process by fostering the weaklings and defending the helpless, but to struggle above them, and prove ourselves worthy of survival. That is the process of evolution.

I see no possibility of logical escape from that if God from the first foresaw the evil of creation. If He combined omnipotent creative power and fore-omniscience, the Creator and the Creator alone is ultimately responsible for evil, and in all your religious activities, ameliorative social efforts, all your missions of mercy, you are merely fighting against creative energy, and even if I grant you that these gentler forces are also the power of God, even then the utmost you can make of it is that it is God fighting on both sides. Every kindly impulse, every act of mercy and goodness, gives the lie to this monstrous absurdity. God in the literal sense of the word did *not* create evil; He did not foresee it either. Why He did not foresee it is a mystery shrouded in the very nature of every being endowed with free will.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHY DOES NOT THE CREATOR ANNIHILATE SATAN?

BUT now arises one more question with which several of the reviewers appear to think they have disposed of me and my book. The *Christian World*, in particular, propounds it in a notice which I thought very unworthy of a paper so widely and so justly esteemed for its breadth and ability and fairness. The reviewer evidently is no believer in Satan; but, he says, with impressive profundity and lucidity, "the doctrine of Satanic agency may stand on its own ground for what it is worth."

Well, yes; no doubt. So may every other doctrine, good, bad, and indifferent. How does that help anybody? The whole question is what is it worth? It is just the one question that this book is an attempt to discuss, and I have shown what many reviewers have allowed to be grave and weighty reasons for believing that the doctrine of Satanic agency is no myth, but a stupendous reality. My critic, however, with charitable superiority, lightly brushes it all aside. "If," he says, "the writer attains to that higher initiation which he believes may

possibly succeed to our present mortal state, he will probably smile at his own mundane theories."

My own mundane theories! As though *I* had conjured up Satan out of the vasty deep of my own inner consciousness, to account for evil! Had none of the great figures of Biblical history any theories of Satanic influence? Not a few of them have hitherto been supposed to have been men of profound spiritual insight, to say nothing about "inspiration," and they one and all believed in Satan. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is full of the idea of an evil personality in antagonism to the good, and though I do not for a moment maintain that that in itself is any sufficient reason for trying to believe what the growing light and the increasing knowledge of mankind have proved to be untrue, I do maintain that it is a fact which should entitle the theory to careful and respectful consideration before it is dismissed to the category of exploded beliefs. If Christ Himself did not believe in some sort of spiritual potency for evil, what is there we may be quite sure He did believe in? The doctrine of Satanic agency *my* mundane theory! For the *Christian World* entirely to ignore the fact that Christ most unquestionably believed in the existence and activity of Satan is simply amazing. A Unitarian might do so logically and consistently enough. The Unitarians hold that Christ was not God. He was man —superlatively endowed by the spirit of God, it is true, but nevertheless a man, with a man's limitations, and manifestly liable to many of the errors and ignorances of his time. The fact that in common with all his fellow-countrymen Christ implicitly believed in the devil is not to the Unitarian in itself

sufficient ground for a belief in a devil in our day. But from the Trinitarian standpoint of the *Christian World* the case is totally different. With the orthodox world it is a cardinal doctrine that Christ was God, one with the Supreme Ruler of the universe, the very embodiment and incarnation of the Spirit of Goodness in conflict with evil. How could such a Being possibly be mistaken in His belief about the devil? To believe that Christ was God Almighty, and at the same time to suppose that He may have been merely under the popular delusion of His day upon this matter, is an inconsistency about as puerile and ridiculous as it is possible to imagine anything. If Christ was God, surely He must have known whether there was a devil or no, and even if He was only a man supremely endowed with divine spirit and power and insight, even then His "mundane theory" of Satanic agency can hardly be dismissed as something that "may be taken for what it is worth."

The theory is not mine at all. I have simply found it among many other speculations of the world upon the subject of evil. I have examined it with the rest, and I have found that, stripped of all the absurdities and puerilities of superstition, and considered in the light of our modern knowledge of the universal reign of law, this ancient Biblical theory of evil, dim and vague as it necessarily was, was nevertheless probably a real intuition—a keen spiritual insight into the heart of the mystery. I have shown, by appeal to facts and by what I believe to be irrefutable arguments, that this theory is not only probable, but that it squares with the moral and material phenomena of the world around as no other theory

will do. I may hereafter smile at much that I now hold to be truth, but then a great many people—and among them some of the keenest thinkers and brightest intelligences of the time—are smiling *now*—smiling contemptuously at the simplicity of Christian people who are still pounding away at the old ideas and on the old lines about love and goodness and fatherhood, while science seems to be relentlessly battering away the very foundations upon which all such teaching is based. In the blindest of optimism they are preaching a God of goodness and gentleness and love, while the real God that science seems to be more and more clearly revealing is that horrid nightmare, the God of Evolution, whose schemes have been drawn in lines of blood and tears, to whom nations are but dust beneath his feet, whose trusty ministers are war and pestilence and famine, whose laws are pitiless as death and as irresistible as the storm.

I have not invented Satan; but just as modern thought has expanded the idea of Deity from the old petty conceptions of a Judaic Jehovah to the sublime realisation of the God of the Universe ruling all things by the awful and majestic sweep of law, so I have endeavoured to put the conception of Satan on to a correspondingly higher level.

But now for the further question. In a decidedly flippant and superficial style, which might have been appropriate enough if the book under consideration had been a treatise on pitch and toss, and with a hind-before carelessness of reasoning quite unworthy of so momentous a subject, the *Christian World* wants to know why, on the author's own hypothesis, God does not suppress the devil?

Robinson Crusoe's man Friday wanted to know just the same thing. "If God much strong," says Friday, "much might as the devil, why God no kill the devil, so make him no more do wicked?"

It has been a matter of frequent observation that the most ignorant savages and the most enlightened of the civilised have their common perplexities and speculations. But it is curious, nevertheless, to find the *Christian World* snuffing me out with the very poser that poor Friday propounded to Crusoe. What is even more curious is to find that Robinson Crusoe himself gives at any rate one very neat and effective, if imperfect, answer to the reviewer.

"You may as well ask me why God does not kill you and me when we do wicked things here that offend Him," replied Crusoe. "We are preserved to repent and be pardoned."

There is one answer. But before anything like a complete and satisfactory reply can be given, the question itself needs some expansion. In looking over the whole field in which good and evil are in conflict, one wants to know not merely why God does not kill the devil, but why He does not effectively and summarily resist and extinguish evil in all its innumerable ramifications—why He does not stamp out evil from nature and life. If all the wrong and injustice, the cruelty and misfortune, in this strangely perplexing world of ours are contrary to His will and were never intended by Him, why does He not directly intervene and maintain the right and put down the wrong? Why does He tolerate evil? If it is really true, as I have been maintaining, that the Creator's beneficent laws have been disturbed in their balance and adjustment, why

do these laws still go ruthlessly on as though no such disturbance had taken place?

These are great questions, and we puny mortals can but pry and peep and speculate and wait. This much, I think, we may confidently assume, that the higher our standpoint, the wider the sweep of our vision, the more likely we are to be right in our speculations. Indeed, a very wide sweep of vision is indispensably necessary if we are to consider these matters with any intelligence or with the smallest chance of discovering the truth. Confine your speculations to this sphere only, and you will arrive at no conceivable solution of the great riddle of evil. It is all darkness and chaos, absolute and hopeless.

Let us, then, take the widest possible view of the Creator's realm. Turn your telescopes out to the uttermost stars, let imagination wander beyond them and endeavour to realise infinity of space till the brain fairly reels. Look backwards and forwards and ponder on eternity of time until the history of this globe becomes a mere point, and then consider what must be involved in a scheme of life at all adequate to such periods and such spaces. Reflect on the probability—or at all events on the possibility—that time and space may teem with evolving life in every stage of development, from microbes to archangels, and then imagine that it was once all "very good"—all entirely in accordance with the mind and will of a perfectly wise, a perfectly benevolent Creator. Health, happiness, harmony, normal growth, true progress everywhere, every being from the highest to the lowest the object of fatherly love and fatherly interest. All very good.

But now an awful catastrophe happens. One of

the purest and brightest and loftiest of created beings falls from his state of rectitude and resolves to go contrary to divine love and goodness. How he could have done so—by what flaw in his being, by what oversight in his creation, by what want of perfect balance between his own personality and the divine laws of mind which must have been designed both for his perfect freedom and his perfect safety, the awful lapse could have come about—it is impossible even to surmise, and it really would not be necessary to do so even if it were possible. If we can push back the difficulty so far, we may very well leave it there. If from the basis of what we know of life and nature it can reasonably be argued that the Creator intended good and only good, and that only something in the nature of a flaw, a fault somewhere in the obscure and mysterious region of intelligent free will, led to the whole tragedy of evil, we need seek to know no more. Further knowledge could not affect our views of life, our daily conduct, our faith in creative wisdom and goodness and beneficence. If we can see any trustworthy light so far, then the thing has been explained to a point at which it no longer concerns us. For the light to leave us there is a matter of no practical consequence whatever; but to be left at the point at which the highest scientific knowledge of the day flashes a lurid glare upon a Creator who on all hands seems to be evolving His great scheme of life by every force of wickedness and cruelty and wrong, is quite another matter. All history shows that in the long run men never rise above their conceptions of their gods, and if this horrible ideal of a Supreme Being, whose ways are pitiless and bloody and cruel, is to be the God of

the future, then the only hope for the race is that it may be able to shut Him out of sight and thought, and may yield itself to the kindlier and gentler and nobler impulses and motives that are somehow evolved by life itself.

We cannot tell in the least how the fall from original good came about—what or where the flaw was. We only know that something at fault there must have been. Everything points to free will as one of the attributes of the highest life, absolutely essential to it, and free will obviously implies the freedom to go wrong. But it does not imply any necessity to go wrong, and if the Creator's laws were designed to incline all His creatures to the right and the good, so long as those laws fulfilled their purpose there must have been entire safety. While the spiritual being was adapted to the laws and the laws to the being, there was a necessity to go right, absolute free will notwithstanding. That, you say, is a paradox. Yes, it is, and until you can explain that paradox and can unfold all the mystery of freedom under the reign of law, you cannot unravel all the mystery of evil. Freedom under the reign of inflexible law is of course a thing quite familiar to us in social and political life. A nation of free men is not a nation in which there is no law. It is a nation in which the system of laws may be very elaborate and inexorably maintained; but it is a nation in which there is no law that has not the hearty assent and does not meet with the ready obedience of the mass of the people, and a *perfectly* free community would be one in which every individual recognised the wisdom and justice of every law and yielded loyal obedience to it. Such a people would

be free in the highest sense of the word, and if there was one man among them who was not free, it would be the man who, under such a régime, repudiated the laws and refused to be governed by them, and yet at every point found himself in conflict with them. So long as a man recognises the justice and necessity of a law and is entirely willing to submit to it, he is a free man notwithstanding his submission. There is harmony between himself and the law. The law is adapted to him and he to it. So long as that is the case he is free, and yet from the very necessity of things he must obey. The necessity arises both from the law and from his own mental and moral nature. Until there is some change in one or the other he cannot so much as wish to go wrong. He is in most complete subjection to authority, and yet is most completely free. Until you can explain to me how you, a strong, upright, healthy-minded man, can be perfectly free to murder your own child, and yet at the same time find it literally impossible to do it, I cannot tell you how the Creator could have endowed a great spiritual nature with absolute freedom, while confidently intending that that freedom should always be exercised in the choice of the right. That that must have been the intention it seems to me reasonable to believe. Why the freedom was abused, how it was abused, it is quite impossible to say. It is a point of no practical importance and quite hopeless of any solution, and, for my part, I do not care to waste time and thought over it.

But though we cannot frame even a satisfactory surmise as to how the freedom came to be abused—and it really is not worth while to try to do so—the

other question, why, when the freedom *was* abused and evil began to desolate the universe, the Creator did not at once annihilate the offender and crush out evil under omnipotent power, is one upon which it may be possible and useful to speculate a little. To some extent at least we may understand this.

At one point in the writing of these supplementary chapters there occurred to me—or rather, there *re*curred to me—an idea which seemed to offer a possible solution of the mystery of evil without the agency of an evil power. I have just said that the moral fall of a being created pure and upright necessarily involved some failure of divine law. Moral laws perfectly adapted to the government of perfectly free beings must have been calculated to incline those beings to choose only the good. How they could thus have been inclined by the operation of law and yet have remained free is, as I have more than once recognised, one of the inscrutable mysteries of life. That it may be so, and indeed really is so, every man knows by his own experience. Every man knows himself to be perfectly free to do things which, by the very laws of his nature, it is impossible for him to do. Just so it must have been with these higher intelligences. The Creator must have intended that by the laws of their being they should incline to the choice of the right. If a single created intelligence chose evil it could have been only by the failure of these laws.

Now the thought that occurred to me was this: If, after all, it is necessary to assume some flaw in the Creator's system of laws, why may that flaw not have occurred at some other point? "You say," I argued with myself, "that on no conceivable hypo-

thesis can evil have arisen without some fault in the established system of law. Very well; then if there must have been failure somewhere, why must the failure have been at this particular point and at no other? Why may it not have occurred just at that critical stage in the evolution of life at which selfishness and love first came into antagonism? You have been contending that the predominance of selfishness instead of love must have been due to the interference of a malignant power. Why is it necessary to assume such an interference? If law may fail at one point, it may at another, and it may have failed here. Is not this, after all, a simpler explanation than the other?"

Now in an early chapter of the book I had glanced at this possible solution and had dismissed it as one that could not for an instant be entertained. When, however, I found myself compelled once again to look fairly in the face the fact that there must somewhere or other have been a lapse in the working of law, this idea recurred to me with what seemed to be irresistible force. The alternative completely nonplussed me for a long time. It seemed altogether to upset the whole of my argument, and once more most effectually and finally to banish Satan to the realms of myth. A flaw somewhere there must be; why not here? And if here, malignant agency was clearly unnecessary. It looked like a new and a true light.

I now believe it to be entirely false, and the reason I believe so is based upon just the fact that the mischief has not been remedied. Evil is still working in innumerable ways. I cannot conceive the possibility of a beneficent Creator

detecting *in the initial stage of creation* such a flaw as He must necessarily have foreseen would produce all the moral and physical evil of this world without at once remedying it. "Only some slight and insignificant infusion of evil,"—if I may repeat myself,—"but the Creator's own laws of life and progress and heredity will go on expanding and developing it to the unutterable misery of unborn myriads, and as time runs on, the most hideous diseases, the fiercest passions, the most deadly and destructive strife, the darkest superstitions, the most revolting cruelties, every phase and form of evil that have racked and tormented the world, lie out before that prescient gaze. To see it all coming, to take in the full measure of all the anguish and horror of the world's evil, to know that He Himself had called it all forth, and to let it all go on—why, the thing is unthinkable."

Yes, it is, quite unthinkable. As I have said, a beneficent Creator would have corrected the initial maladjustment if that had been the origin of the mischief, or He would have crushed the whole thing out of existence and have started again. But to crush out by sheer power a scheme of life in an initial stage is one thing; to crush out, by sheer Almighty power, life at its highest conceivable point of development is quite another thing. If the world's evil is the outcome of any initial flaw in creative work, for my own part, I cannot believe in the perfect beneficence of that work. But if the whole awful result is an unforeseen and undesigned outcome of the exercise of free will somewhere at the very apex of life, then I hold that the very evil of the world and the existence of Satan may not

merely be reconciled with divine goodness and wisdom and strength, but may constitute the highest evidence of it. If the Creator's laws failed at that early stage, then the Creator, and the Creator alone, is responsible for all that has come of it. It was his own work. He must have seen the whole horrid future, and He let the scheme go on even if He did not deliberately plan the whole sequence of things, and all that, as I have endeavoured to show in this book, without any adequate or intelligible reason. It is inconceivable that it should have been so. But if evil originated in a lawless exercise of free will in a being at the very summit of life, then I hold, and I am going to endeavour to prove, that it is equally inconceivable that a perfectly wise and a perfectly unchangeable Being should for a moment have thought of crushing out the evildoer, or of summarily suppressing the evil he has wrought. When, therefore, the *Christian World* wants to know "on the author's own hypothesis" why God did not kill the devil, my answer is that being perfectly wise, perfectly good, immovably strong, and altogether unchangeable in His purposes, He could not have done it. He showed the greatest love, the highest wisdom, and the supremest strength, by letting the offender live and evil take its course.

CHAPTER XIX

WHY NOT SUPPRESS EVIL?

WHAT may we suppose to have been the ultimate purpose of God in creation? No doubt the peopling of the universe with beings akin to His own nature —a grand procession of life ever moving upwards towards His own absolute perfection. The Creator intended to people—not this puny world of ours, but the whole universe with beings who should serve Him and live their lives in perfect freedom. They should submit to His laws, not because they were compelled to do so, but out of pure love to Himself, and because they were immovably convinced that those laws are supremely wise, and good, and beneficent.

Well now, that is the purpose, and the whole stupendous scheme of things is happily working on towards it, when this mysterious lapse occurs. By some inscrutable chance one of the brightest and loftiest of living spirits revolts, and the first note of discord shivers through the universe. What is to be done? How is this emergency to be met?

Let me, in parenthesis, remind you that I am not imagining anything new or strange. Precisely the same thing is quite familiar in everyday family life.

Children, bound by the ties of love and by the laws of their being, find their good and their happiness and their freedom in willing obedience to parents. But every now and again this same mysterious freedom of will asserts itself in opposition, and there is no good and wise parent who does not sometimes find himself hesitating between the winning power of love and what may seem to be the necessity for stern compulsion. I am but imagining that what takes place every day in the spiritual life of families around may also have taken place on an infinitely higher plane of existence. So far as I can see, the parallel is quite complete. If you are prepared to say there *is* no higher plane of existence, of course there is an end of the argument. But if there are similar relationships on higher levels, I do not see how there can be the slightest difficulty in supposing that there also free will may create the same antagonism and may impose the same necessity to choose.

We shall be better able to understand the situation if we first get rid of one or two traditional ideas that have been orthodox in the past and that still exert some influence on what passes for religious thought. Celestial beings, according to old-fashioned orthodoxy, were created in full perfection, but after a brief trial in heaven there was a revolt against authority and a sudden fall from the highest pinnacle of goodness to the lowest depth of wickedness.

Now if there is any truth at all in the modern theory of evolution, this idea of the creation of archangels is probably as erroneous as the old orthodox creed about the creation of Adam. According to modern evolution, nothing in the whole universe is created perfect. Life in all its circling spirals is a

grand crescendo. The very highest is a development from the very lowest, and assuming that such beings as archangels exist, there is no more reason to suppose that they were called into existence by a sudden almighty fiat than science can nowadays find for believing that Adam came forth a perfect man at the call of his Creator. The highest manhood, it is now held, has been slowly evolved from the lowest recognisable forms of life, and if in the whole round of existence there is anything higher than man, there is every presumption that it is only the result of further continuation of the same process of development. It must be borne in mind that there is no reason whatever for supposing that this planet of ours is in the forefront of evolution. Life may have been evolving in other spheres millions of years before this planet began to assume even its first faint nebulous form, and the universe may have been teeming with the resultant spiritual life unnumbered ages before the earth began to spin in space. The thought of an archangel being but the leading figure in a stupendous ascending scale beginning with a single cell of protoplasm is no doubt startling enough, but the grandeur and sublimity of it can hardly be lost upon the dullest imagination; and on the earth beneath our feet and in the stellar spaces above us, and in the very vital and mental processes within us, science has revealed ten thousand facts that may be adduced in evidence to show that such an ideal is not only conceivable but in the highest degree probable. Archangels, then, if there are such beings, are not special creations of the Almighty, any more than men are. They are in all probability the highest outcome of evolution, and when they stood in un-

sullied splendour and purity, veritable sons of the great Father of all, they were not the creatures of a day, just called forth, unknown and untried. They were the firstborn of the great spiritual family of the whole universe, the outcome of a process of evolution and education that the Universal Father had been carrying on with patient solicitude through periods of time that our furthest stretches of imagination cannot ever so faintly realise.

I know that all this may be put down as baseless speculation, the merest rhapsody. But only a fool can look out upon the midnight stars and listen to what the astronomer has to tell him of their masses and periods and spaces without being forced to admit that this vast material mechanism irresistibly suggests a correspondingly vast scheme of life. These masses of dead matter are quite unintelligible without it, and he who contemptuously dismisses every speculation that assumes planes of life higher than his own only shows how very low his own plane is, how extremely narrow are the limits of his own faculties. If—and only if—you are prepared to dismiss all religion as folly, all belief in spiritual nature as a delusion, all thought of an existence hereafter as purely mythical, only if you are prepared to take your stand on the merest materialism, can you logically refuse to concede that these speculations lie well within the range of probability. If there is the smallest basis for any religion at all, if there is such a thing as spiritual life, if there is any hereafter, then these suggestions are possible and probable.

You have, then, to bear in mind that these higher intelligences among whom evil must have originated were not new creations. They were in the most

literal and comprehensive sense the eldest sons of the Universal Father, the highest outcome of an evolving universe that for untold ages had known no ruling power but that of love.

Not only is the idea of sudden creation of the highest spiritual beings totally at variance with all our observations of life and inconsistent with the gradual evolution of the universe, and therefore probably quite erroneous, but it may be equally erroneous to imagine any sudden fall from the height of goodness and beneficence to the lowest depths of evil and malignity. In the world of spirit as we know anything of it, neither goodness nor badness of nature comes except by degrees, and usually by almost imperceptible degrees. It is probable, therefore, that the first open indications of revolt would be of no very heinous or startling character, and, whatever they were, with a being of such exalted intelligence, they would be sure to be justified by a certain plausibility of reasoning.

And there is just one other consideration that should be taken into account. If it is possible to suppose that one of the leading spiritual personalities of the creation broke into anything corresponding to open revolt, it is pretty safe to assume that that revolt would indicate a widely prevalent disaffection. If you heard to-day that in one of our colonies some leading statesman was talking sedition against the Crown, and appeared to be on the verge of rebellion, you would assume as a matter of course that there must be some sort of ferment going on, and that there would probably be a good many of the colonists in just the mood to follow that statesman's lead, and to take part in resistance to

authority. It is easy to conceive of precisely the same condition of things in the spiritual realm.

Now then let us look again at the whole situation. Suppose that ever since the first living thing quivered on the first habitable globe in space, there has been a grand procession of life perfect in every stage and all evolved and controlled and directed by perfect love and beneficence. And suppose that this has been going on æon after æon until the universe has become peopled by unnumbered millions of these higher intelligences, the sons and servants of the Supreme. Imagine that their condition has been one of unfailing love to God and of absolutely perfect freedom. And now comes this first conflict with authority. Free will is for the first time asserting itself in antagonism, and it may possibly be on some point seemingly of so trivial a character that only omniscience itself can discern all the gravity of it. What is to be done? There is the germ of all evil in that rebellious will. It is the first time that love has failed to win obedience; it is the first time that an impulse of mere selfishness has actuated any soul in the universe, and the omniscient eye flashes not only from end to end of the empire, but along the future also and sees the whole dread possibility of development. What can be done? The power that created that revolting spirit possibly could instantly destroy him; possibly not, however, for he has been endowed with the very nature of the Eternal One. But assuming that the Creator who made him could also destroy him, shall He do so? Bear in mind that from the very dawn of creation the ruling power that alone has been

relied upon has been the power of love, and that literally perfect freedom is of the very essence of that love. There cannot be the perfection of love without unqualified freedom, and there cannot be unqualified freedom without the perfection of love. Now, seeing that love has been the one ruling principle of the Creator's empire, shall He suddenly abandon this principle and resort to force?

"Yes," you say. "Seeing, as He would do, all that was involved in that germ of evil, His very love for His creatures might well prompt that one stroke of destructive power."

But consider. I have just reminded you that there could be no such thing as perfect love without perfect freedom. Now just imagine that in the presence of all the highest intelligences of the universe, the very first revolt against supreme authority is punished with annihilation, and what becomes of the perfect freedom and the perfect love? Is there a spirit from end to end of the universe that will henceforth feel himself perfectly free to obey or disobey? Of course there is not. Perfect liberty of service has gone for ever and for ever. Not a soul in all the higher realms of life but henceforth knows that he disobeys on peril of instant destruction, and the whole basis of the Creator's moral empire is at a stroke changed in its character. For the first time in the history of creation the supreme will has been crossed, and for the first time vengeance flashes forth from the very heart and centre of an empire of love. The Father of all life has done a deed stern and dreadful, and to the comparatively limited intelligences around, apparently harsh, cruel,

tyrannical, and unnecessary. From that moment His empire, in part at least, is founded on dread and apprehension, and perfect freedom of service there can never be again. You and I in our panic and impatience, our weakness and shortsightedness, might well have struck the blow that would for ever have extinguished moral freedom through all the higher planes of life. But there was neither panic nor impatience, neither weakness nor shortsightedness, but the grandeur of infinite strength, the unruffled calm of full knowledge and clear foresight, and the unchangeableness of perfect beneficence. From the very inception of the creative scheme it has been determined that it shall be an empire based on liberty and love, and God will not suddenly abandon His principles and change the very foundation and character of His power. To say nothing of divine reluctance to smite out of existence one of the highest and noblest, one of the nearest and dearest of created beings who might yet be won back to love and allegiance, there were clear considerations of high policy absolutely forbidding it. It is well that there were. The sorrow and suffering of this world of ours it is sometimes heart-breaking to ponder over; but take the whole mass of evil since evil began on this planet, and it will be but the dust of the balance when weighed against the evil that it is reasonable to believe would have resulted if, under any provocation whatever, force had been substituted for love as the ruling principle of creation. Take a narrowly limited view of life, confine it to this globe and the short span of time that even the race can run from its cradle to its grave, and evil looms out enormous, and there is no

possibility of minifying it. But pile it in imagination into one huge mountain of miseries, and then compare it with what might have been if the Creator had made stern compulsion the basis of His power instead of love, and the mountain becomes at once a veritable molehill.

No; there are moral and spiritual "intractabilities" as real as material and mathematical ones, and one of them is involved in the truth that moral evils cannot be remedied by force. If God would do it He could not, any more than He could make two sides of a triangle together less than the third, or put the centre of a circle anywhere but in a position equidistant from all points of the circumference. In the very nature of things it is impossible. Moral evils can be effectively overcome only by moral remedies. The evils somehow originating in the exercise of free will can be met only by remedies winning over free will, not by extinguishing it. Where freedom is concerned, exert any sort of compulsion, and just in proportion as you do so, freedom is destroyed. Government may be by force—driving and compelling, or it may be by love—wooing and winning. It cannot be by both. Experience sometimes seems to show that it may be. You, for instance, very likely manage your children partly by compulsion, and partly by love. If they do not obey, there is to be punishment; if they do, they are to be rewarded. Theology in the past has sought to promote goodness in just the same way. It has had threats of hell-fire for the wicked and impenitent, and promises of heaven for the good. It has been one of the most lamentable mistakes of theology. Conduct, no doubt, may be influenced in this way

both in the home and in the church; the highest character never can be produced by it, and I suppose there are times when we are all of us more or less conscious that it cannot. You wish to make your child good and tractable and obedient to your will. You are perfectly aware that the true way of doing it—if you were but equal to it—is by the exercise of unfailing love, winning the child's affection and thus inclining him to free and spontaneous obedience. But you yourself are weak and irritable and impatient. Your own love fails you at times and you resort to scolding and reproach, threats, and punishment. And when you are most severe, you perhaps delude yourself into the idea that you are strongest in your government and training of the child. But in your better moods you know that it is just then that you are weakest. You know that if you were more patient and forbearing and gentle, and were thus able to maintain a firm ascendency over the heart of the child, your rule would be infinitely stronger in the long run, and that you would not only ensure good conduct, but would be developing and strengthening character also. Force is no evidence of strength in this matter—no source of strength. Love is infinitely stronger, and it is the only conceivable ruling power consistent with the perfect freedom of those who are ruled. The goodness that is entirely free—the only genuine, unadulterated goodness—has nothing whatever to do with rewards or punishments. Real goodness in its highest perfection is the perfectly free choice of right for the mere love of it, and the moment you begin, either by punishment or reward, to influence that freedom, you begin to destroy it, and you render

the highest goodness impossible. That this is a truth we all know, and it is a truth inherent in the necessity of things.

On the basis of this principle, apparently, the Creator has chosen to govern the universe. He saw from the very outset that if the life He was about to call forth was to develop the highest goodness, the loftiest character, His creatures must be literally free. They could not be free if allegiance to Himself was to meet with reward, or revolt was to be followed with punishment. Happiness and every real good would result from obedience to the Creator, and suffering from disobedience; but happiness or suffering must come not as reward or punishment at the mere caprice of the Almighty, but by the necessity inherent in the principles on which beneficence itself had framed all things, and called forth all life. Those principles cannot be changed. All the hierarchy of the universe must be persuaded and convinced as free and reasonable beings that the Creator's laws are wise and necessary. That they *are* wise and necessary is an unalterable truth, and wherever it is disputed, it can be effectively and finally enforced only by actual experience of what comes when those laws are broken or disturbed. Though the great heart at the centre of things must throb in sympathy with the victims of evil arising from perverted free will, freedom must take its course. God intended it from the first. The laws of spirit and of matter must go unswervingly on. Worlds may crash, and whole fields of life may be submerged in death and anguish, but it is not the wish or the work of the Creator. There is a necessity for it all, based deep in His very love, and it must all go on until evil itself shall

actually and literally work out death, or the great pitiful Heart shall win back the rebels to submission, wiser and stronger, and for ever again immovable in their allegiance.

The sum of the whole matter, then, appears to be this :—Evil originated in the inscrutable mystery of free will. Even if we assume that God could have crushed it out by destroying the being in whom it originated, there were insuperable reasons why He should not do so. The annihilation of Satan would not only have been foreign to the nature of God, but would have frustrated the Creator's main purpose, and would have changed the very nature of His creatures, and the very basis of His rule. Moreover, it probably would not have had even the justification of success. Evil would no doubt have been checked and rebellion crushed for a time. But it is inconceivable that only one spiritual being should have been concerned in the revolt. It is quite possible that vast numbers of ardent and fearless spirits, more intense in their love of freedom than any patriots whom our histories have enshrined, were in sympathy with it, and the probability is that rebellion would have broken out again and again. And again and again the crushing out would have had to be repeated, and the Creator, whose very nature is love, would have been literally compelled to assume the position and to have manifested the character of a merciless tyrant whose unsparing thunderbolts inspired dread, and would have engendered and apparently have justified hatred. Hatred would have prompted revolt, and revolt would have required suppression, and suppression would have intensified hatred. The spiral of life, instead of circling higher

and higher, would have tended constantly lower and lower until, it is quite conceivable, the least appalling issue of the dreadful development would have been universal death and the total frustration of the great creative scheme.

The first edition of this book was an attempt to show that the existence of a malignant power in opposition to the benignant energy of the Creator is the simplest explanation of evil. Scarcely a single critic of the book made any attempt to refute the arguments by which I endeavoured to maintain that position, but nearly every one of them who gave it any serious attention wanted to know why, if such a power existed, God did not crush it out. I venture to say that I have given them a reasonable answer.

This view of the origin of evil among higher intelligences may be made to harmonise most completely with the theory of a disturbed process of creation, and with the facts of the world around us. Take this world by itself, and neither science, nor religion, nor philosophy, nor all of them combined, can frame a decent apology for much that is going on in it. But look at this world as part of some vast scheme of life and conceive of some such "fall" as I have been supposing, and let this fall of a mighty intelligence be followed by a malicious interference with the established laws which modern science has been so swiftly and so continuously making known, and you have not only the means of intelligibly accounting for this world's evils, but we may at least partially perceive why those evils are allowed to go on. However many worlds there may be, and however varied may be the forms of life in them, assuming that they are the handiwork

of the same Creator, we should expect to find that the fundamental principles of that life would be everywhere the same. We should expect to see here what I have imagined would go on upon a higher plane—law taking its unalterable course, come of it what may. Upon this lower stage and upon that higher one, the ultimate purpose of creation would be absolutely identical—the evolution of the fullest, freest, highest possible life, entirely dominated and regulated by love. This is but an early stage of the vast work. It is true, no doubt, that our case is somewhat different from that of the higher plane. We, at all events, were not concerned in that original revolt. We are—assuming the interference for which I have been contending—to some extent at least the victims of the evils of which higher intelligences were the authors, and it may be asked why God did not at any rate prevent the mischief spreading into this lower sphere. Probably for precisely the same reason that He did not forcibly oppose the progress of evil in the higher one. To secure perfect freedom seems to have been an inflexible purpose in the development of the scheme of life, and with that purpose forcible restraint would have been as inconsistent in one part of the Creator's empire as in another. We in our weakness, our vacillation, our proneness to temporising expediency and compromise, find it of course extremely difficult to realise action carried on age after age without the slightest deviation from rule, and which no adventitious circumstances whatever can deflect by a hair's-breadth from its prescribed course. That, however, is only because we *are* weak and vacillating and given to compromise. In the world around us we have no lack of evidence

of inflexibility of principle. Love and freedom are inseparable from the highest life. The Creator has designed *only* the highest life as the ultimate outcome of evolution. He intended it from the very first, and all things are working up to it. It is not in the power of even unforeseen events to change that purpose. Sooner or later all events, foreseen or unforeseen, must shape themselves in accordance with His eternal principles, and, strong in His conscious supremacy, He goes unswervingly on. Imagine the calm, sad ultimatum: "I made you for freedom, and free you must and shall remain. The laws you are spurning are but the expressions of the love you are wounding. But my love and my laws are alike unchangeable. Go; my creation lies before you."

Anything like forcible restraint or prevention would have been contrary to principle on that higher plane; it would be equally contrary to principle in this lower one. Free will is here also certainly one of the prime factors in life, and however it may have come about, there can be no sort of doubt about the terrible perversion of it. On neither plane may we be able to explain the perversion, but there it is. Men in their freedom do wrong and delight in doing wrong, and practically their case is precisely that which I have been supposing on a higher level of existence. In this world, just as in the other I have been imagining, there is antagonism towards the Creator and His moral laws on the part of the created. How is that antagonism to be dealt with? Shall every wrongdoing be met with a thunderbolt? Shall instant retribution overtake every infraction of the moral law and the offender instantly submit or perish? If so, what becomes of moral freedom? Is not the

case here precisely the same as when the first rebel spirit opposed his will to the Almighty? And do not precisely the same considerations come in? The inexorable operation of moral and physical laws does undoubtedly work cruelly and unjustly, but unless free will is to be blotted out of the Creator's scheme, where is the remedy? When the whole world witnesses some gigantic injustice; when, for instance, the Sultan of Turkey and his creatures deliberately plot and carry out the massacre of a hundred thousand Armenians whose cries for succour and defence go up to heaven, it really seems to us as though the Almighty might be expected to intervene, the wickedness is so flagrant, and the helplessness of the victims so pitiable. But what would you have the Almighty do? Shall the Sultan of Turkey be deprived of his moral freedom to do such things, or shall steel refuse to kill or fire to burn or hunger to starve? It really seems as though the Supreme Ruler should intervene in some way. But if the moral law of freedom, and the physical laws which, in the exercise of that freedom, are brought into play to desolate provinces and to work nameless cruelties are to be suspended in this case, why not in other cases? Your neighbour endeavours to do you some wrong. Shall there be interference here also? When he attempts to strike you a cowardly blow, shall paralysis seize his arm or his will? If he puts poison into your food, shall the poison refuse to do its office? Under such conditions there could be no such thing as moral freedom or physical law. Everything would be involved in chaos. The mere fact of a wrong thing being impossible would not only destroy your free will: it would deprive you of all exercise of your moral judgment also.

There would be no room for judgment or choice. The "right" thing would be the thing you *could* do, and the "wrong" would be the thing you *could not* do. There would be no scope whatever for the exercise of judgment or of moral preference. Under such a condition of things a man would lose everything that is distinctive of a man, and would become merely an automaton.

The fact is, that if men are to be men at all, they must be free to do the worst things as well as the best. There is an insuperable necessity for it, and God Himself cannot dispense with that necessity. It is probable that never in the whole course of time has anything like forcible restraint been applied to spiritual beings. The laws of compulsory force were designed exclusively for inert matter, and to this day they are exclusively confined to inert matter. All the forces behind the concerted monarchs of Europe at this moment could not alter the affections or the opinions of the meanest of their subjects. And more than this, the most affectionate and lofty-spirited father who ever trod the earth would be equally powerless to coerce the thoughts and affections of his own children. He may command their obedience of course, but he cannot command their willing obedience. They are essentially free by nature, and the powers at his disposal are not adapted to the compulsion of their spirits. Force was never designed for spiritual life, and to have prevented the introduction of evil into this world by any kind of coercive restraint would have been contrary to eternal creative principles. It would be equally contrary to those same principles to prevent, by any sort of coercion, the natural working out of that evil.

The thing is not possible, and if it were possible, it would not be politic. If evil is the outcome of the perversion of free will, to suppress that evil by any sort of coercive power would not remedy the perversion of free will; it would simply destroy the freedom. Any attempt forcibly to extinguish evil would not only fail from the very nature of things, but it would destroy the only possibility of extinguishing it. Suppose that not only men below, but an infinite host of spirits above, have to be reasonably convinced of the legitimacy and the inevitableness of the Creator's rule and of the real wisdom of submission to it. Suppose that, in any way whatever, doubt has been engendered among intelligent creatures in higher stages of existence —just as doubt most unquestionably has been engendered among ourselves—as to whether hearty allegiance to the Supreme Ruler really is the source of all good and happiness, and whether disaffection must really entail serious evils. What would be the best proof upon the matter that could possibly be brought home to the hearts and understandings of gods above and men below? Why, if there is any doubt about the wisdom of God's laws and the beneficence of His power, and if there are any who insist on putting the matter to the test, let them put it, and let all created intelligences watch the result. Crush rebels out of existence and they are got rid of, it is true, but nobody is convinced that the power that has crushed them is a righteous and beneficent power. Nobody is persuaded that it would not be better and happier if that tyrannical power *could* only be overcome. The crushing out is proof that it cannot be overcome, and it affords a good reason

for submission; but it is not the submission of free and loyal spirits. Such submission might be perfectly consistent with an aggravated sense of injury and injustice and a deepening hatred. No; let perfect freedom take its course and see what comes of it. There is no teacher like experience, either in this world or in any other. And if the Creator in the calm and confident adherence to principle has once for all decided to allow that test to be made, would you have Him interfere to prevent or modify results just in those extreme cases in which they become most instructive and impressive? If the Creator's wise and deliberate purpose is to show to all intelligences the real nature and possibilities of evil, would you expect Him to permit only small and insignificant evils to develop themselves, and to intervene when they become tragic and terrible? Would you, for instance, have Him permit the Sultan of Turkey to unjustly degrade one of his officers without interference, and yet when this same Sultan and the merciless creatures about him in their damnable degradation plot the cruel and treacherous slaughter of a whole people, would you have Him promptly intervene to thwart the wicked purpose? Would that be the way to teach the real nature and possibilities of evil? Why, if it were practicable, it would be in every way more reasonable for the Supreme Ruler to intervene for the prevention of the petty little accidents and worries of life, and to let the really tragic manifestations of wickedness go freely on.

Tell me that God has planned the evils of life as a means of our education and training for eternity, and I say that such a theory is incredible and

ridiculous. Tell me that your God, in His irresponsible supremacy, has chosen strife and discord and bloodshed and cruelty as His instruments in the work of creation, and I tell you that your God is only partially distinguishable from a devil. But tell me that God has nothing to do with evil, that it has been introduced into His beneficent scheme contrary to His wish and intention, but that, having been introduced, it is permitted to go on and develop only as a dreadful necessity arising from the inevitable nature of things, and in order that the mischief may be finally and effectually remedied, and even the permission of Armenian atrocities becomes intelligible. Heart-breaking as the tragedy of this world's evil must be to the Father of all spirits, it must take its course. The conflict between inexorable law and perverted will can apparently be wrought out only in the course of ages. It cannot be shortened; it cannot be mitigated by the exercise of any mere power.

But let me remind you of what I have already pointed out in an earlier part of the book—that this question of evil is not altogether one of free will, so far as we are concerned in it. It is very far indeed from being true that all evil is the result of our misguided wills. As I have already urged, there are innumerable evils with which men have nothing whatever to do except to suffer from them—cosmic evils, evils of the conflict of the brute forces of nature, earthquakes, storms, droughts, deluges, and so on, all apparently due to a certain want of balance and adjustment. If you are to have anything like a coherent and complete philosophy on the matter, you need some means of accounting for these

as well as for the wrongs that come of men's wickedness and folly. As I have said, you want some cause common to the moral and the material. Grant that somewhere in the history of the universe a being of vast potency and exalted intelligence came into deadly conflict with creative power, and you would of course expect that that conflict would be carried on in both spheres. In plain words, there would be an attempt to wreck both the material world and the scheme of life upon it. The hypothesis of Satan gives you the common cause you require, and one that is quite sufficient to account for all the phenomena.

If there are any of the readers of the book who may feel a prejudice against new philosophies on so old a subject, let me remind them that it is only by the latest speculations of advanced biological science that any theory of the kind has become possible. A belief in the existence of Satan and in his fall from primeval goodness is at least as old as the Bible, but it has been only an intuitive belief. It is only now that it has become possible to lay that ancient intuition beside a perfectly new theory of creation, and to see whether the two things can be made to tally. As to the truth or falsehood of that new theory of creation, let me distinctly say that I do not hold myself to be a competent judge, and I express no opinion whatever. I take the theory at the hands of the most trustworthy science of the day, and I lay it against this hoary belief about evil, and I say that if that evolutionary theory of creation is the true one, we have in this vague old intuition a probable solution of the whole enigma, and one which is full of encouragement, full of hope, and

which leaves the character of the Creator in all its radiant beneficence.

Evil must take its course in this and in all other worlds. The sacred cause of freedom is well able to run the risk, and in the end love shall triumph absolutely. To our limited view the end seems long in coming, but even now the beneficent force on which the Creator is confidently relying to quell rebellion, to put down anarchy, and conquer death itself, is making a heaven on earth in many a dreary corner of life where all seems dark and hopeless. Even now, love is the light of the world, and wherever it gilds a human life, the worst of evils are joyfully endured for the sake of it. It shines in the faces of childhood ; it sweetens the sorrows of age ; it beams down from the midnight stars ; it flashes on every crested wave and glows in every flower. It thrills in the song of birds and sings in the babbling brook. It gives strength to duty and inspiration to heroism. It triumphs over anguish and death itself, and, make what you will of Calvary, have what theory about it you please, the one thing about it upon which we are all agreed is, that high over the sad world it shines out radiant with the very divinity of love. It is that radiance that alone can dispel the gloom of life, and it is the attractive power of it that alone can regenerate the earth and restore the harmony of heaven.

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